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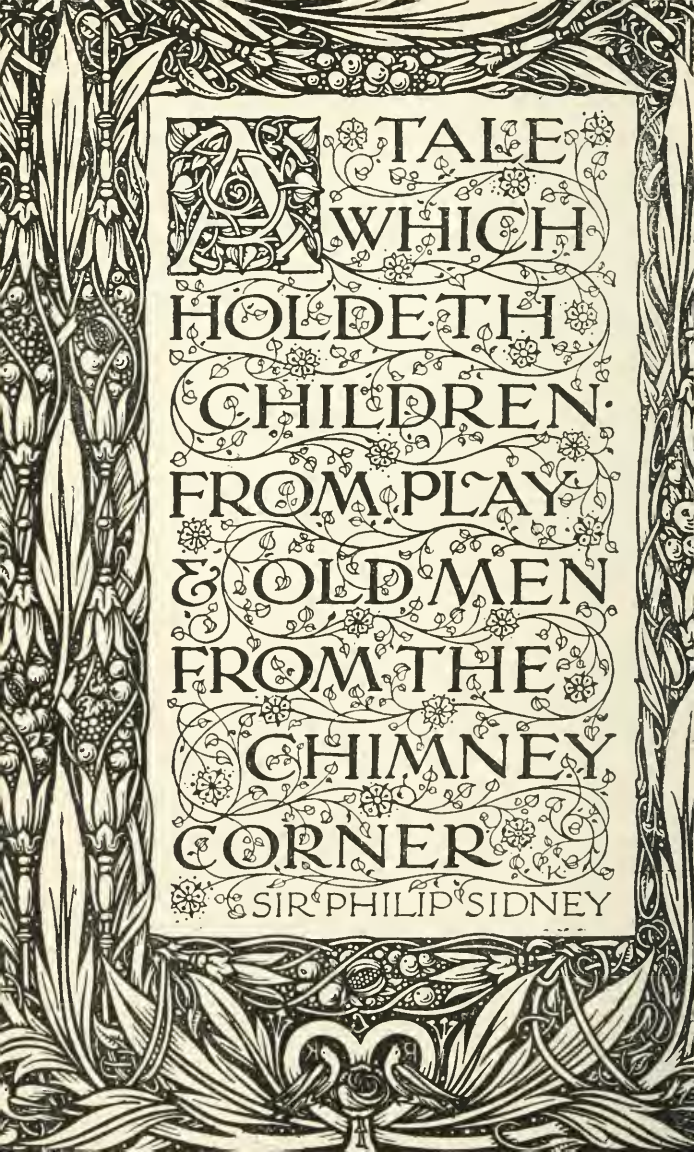
A TALE
WHICH
HOLDETH
CHILDREN
FROM PLAY
& OLD MEN
FROM THE
CHIMNEY
CORNER
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

"MASTER and MAN" and other Parables and Tales

by Count LEO TOLSTOI

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INTRODUCTION

TOLSTOI was still a young man when the Crimean War broke out; but we may date from the years of Tchernaya and Sevastopol the change in him, which at length turned him from a novelist into a fabulist and maker of parables. After the war he enjoyed two years of St Petersburgh society, where his rank and his fame as a soldier and as a writer opened to him all that was most alluring, most likely to attract a man of his temper. But like John Ruskin in England, who was, in those middle years of last century, going through much the same moral experience, and being driven thereby to question the whole tenure of art, he was not satisfied either with what advantage birth and opportunity had given him, or with the selfish philosophy he found current. And then, like the king in the parable, he wished to put and to answer the three Essential Questions of the Hour, the Man and the Deed; in other words, the right time to do or to begin to do; the right man to teach how to do it; and the right thing to be done? But as it was a Hermit in a wood who resolved these three questions for the King, so Tolstoi was driven in working out his destiny to become his own Hermit in a wood.

In his *Confessions*, written at a later time, he arraigned himself as he was in those St Petersburgh days; himself a typical but sensitive product of the circle of habit and pleasure in which its good society revolved. He left the capital, and

retired to his country estate, and set about bettering the old conditions as he best could, and doing what he could to anticipate the hour of the emancipation of the serfs. In the following year he married, and took up with kindling ideas and profound intelligence the patriarchal life that fell to the lot of such a landed proprietor, a Mujik surviving 1861 and the Freedom of the Serf. This indeed was the second event, the Crimean War being the first, which served to give to Count Tolstoi his new deliverance. It gave him a hope for Russia and for the state of mortal man everywhere, which acted powerfully on his imagination and his noble ideal. Living at Yasnaya Polyana, near Toula, he gave himself resolutely and with absolute conscience to the work that awaited him as a landowner, and a working farmer and agriculturist. Children were born to him (thirteen in all, of whom eight survived infancy). He had a large ring about him of family and blood relations. Human experience touched him as it only can touch a man who is daily and hourly responsible for the whole welfare of a little community of people, and who has the sympathetic nerves in his nature alert and always vibrating. His practical faith may be inferred from the tales and fables which follow and which are indeed the natural secretion of that life of his, carried out to its moral ultimate.

Men had gone on in the same old way for a long time, he said (this was when he had passed forty years and more in the wilderness as a complex hermit), before they learnt that all men might be made happy. "Even now only a few have really begun to divine that work ought not to be a byword or a slavery, but should be a thing common to all and so ordered as to bring all happily together in peace and unity."

It sounds very like some of John Ruskin's sayings, does it not?

The lightening of the Atlas burden of labour, the right and the human need of happiness, and the alleviation of the trouble of life and the bitterness of death by the faith in God—these are the cardinal articles of Tolstoi's creed. In trying to give a new and proverbial expression of them in essential forms of art which all could understand, he gave up the secondary complicate modes of fiction in which he had shown himself a master, and took the primary modes instead. He returned for his model to the folk tale and the fable. The result is that he has added some new words to the spiritual vocabulary of man, and added some new fables to the world's stock. Such are those in the pages that follow, tales told poignantly and with the force of simple and universal utterances spoken from the heart and with the whole heart and mind, so as to sink at once into the memory of a child, or to touch the very springs of thought in men and women. Some of Tolstoi's critics have regretted that he gave up being a novelist. But he did so in order to become a new fabulist and maker of parable, and as the true fabulists are few, comparatively, surely ours is the gain?

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The following are the principal *Separate Works*. The dates following the titles are those of first publication in Russian: where no translation is given they will be found in the last-mentioned of the collected works and, in most cases, in the other collections :—Childhood and Youth (1852); trans. by M. von Mysenbug, London, 1862; by I. F. Hapgood, New York, 1886; by Constantine Popoff, London, 1890; Morning of a Landed Proprietor (1852); translated

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MASTER AND MAN

I

It was in the seventies, the day after the feast of Saint Nicholas in the winter. There had been a festival in the parish, and the church sexton, Vassili Andreitch Brekhunoff, (who was also a merchant of the second guild), had been forced to remain at home, since not only was his presence necessary at the church, but he had been receiving and entertaining some of his friends and relations. Now, however, the last of his guests had departed, and he was able to get himself ready to visit a neighbouring landowner, for the purpose of buying some timber for which he had long been in treaty. He was in a hurry to be off, lest rival buyers from the town should deprive him of this eligible bargain. The only reason why the young landowner had asked ten thousand roubles for the timber was that Vassili Andreitch had offered him seven—and seven represented about a third of its value. Perhaps Vassili might have gone on haggling still further (for the wood was in his own district, and there was a recognized agreement between the local merchants and himself that one merchant should not bid against another in the same district), were it not that he had heard that the Government forest contractors were also thinking of coming to treat for the Goviatchkinsky timber, and therefore he had better make up his mind to go at once and clinch the matter. So, as soon as ever the festival was over, he took seven hundred roubles of his own out of the strong-box, added to them two thousand three hundred more out of the church funds which he had by him (making three thousand in all), and counted them carefully. Then he placed them in his pocket-book and got ready to go.

Nikita—the only one of Vassili's workmen who was not drunk that day—ran to put the horse in. Nikita

was not drunk that day for the reason that he had formerly been a toper, but, after pawning his jacket and leather boots for drink during the flesh-eating days, had suddenly foresworn liquor altogether, and drunk nothing during the second month. Even on the present occasion he had kept his vow, in spite of the temptation of the liquor which had flowed in all directions during the first two days of the festival.

He was a *muzhik* of about fifty, and hailed from a neighbouring village—where, however, it was said that he was not a householder, but had lived most of his life among strangers. Everywhere he was valued for his handiness, industry and strength, as well as, still more, for his kindly, cheerful disposition. Yet he had never remained long in any one place, since twice a year, or more, he had been accustomed to get drunk, and at those times would not only pawn everything he possessed, but grow uproarious and quarrelsome as well. Vassili himself had dismissed him more than once, yet had always taken him on again because of the store which he set by his honesty, care for animals, and (most important of all) cheapness. In fact, Vassili allowed Nikita a wage, not of eighty roubles a year—the true market value of such a workman—but of forty only. Moreover, this wage was doled out irregularly and in driblets, as well as, for the most part, not in cash at all, but in the form of goods purchased at a high price from Vassili's own store.

Nikita's wife, Martha—a rugged dame who had once been good-looking—lived at home with their little lad and two girls, but never invited her husband to come and see her; since, in the first place, she had lived for the last twenty years with a cooper (originally a *muzhik* from a distant village who had come to lodge in the hut), and, in the second, because, although she could do what she liked with her husband when he was sober, she dreaded him like fire when he was drunk. Once, for instance, when drunk at home he had seized the occasion to avenge himself upon his wife for all his submissiveness to her when

sober by breaking into her private box, possessing himself of her best clothes, laying all the gowns and other gewgaws upon the wood-block, and chopping them into shreds with an axe. Yet all his earnings were handed over to Martha. Never once had he disputed this arrangement. In fact, only a couple of days before the festival she had driven over to Vassili's store, and been supplied by him with white meal, tea, sugar, and a pint of *vodka*, to the value of three roubles, as well as with five roubles in cash—for all of which she had thanked Vassili as for a particular favour, although, as a matter of fact, Vassili was in Nikita's debt to the extent of at least twenty roubles.

"What agreement need you and I make together?" Vassili had said to Nikita. "Take what you need as you earn it. I don't do business as other folks do—keep my creditors waiting, and go in for detailed accounts and deductions and so on. You and I can trust one another. Only serve me well, and I shall never fail you."

In saying this, Vassili really had believed that he was being good to Nikita, for he could speak so persuasively and had always been so entirely supported in his decisions by his dependents, from Nikita upwards, that even he himself had come to feel comfortably persuaded that he was not cheating them, but actually benefiting them.

"Yes, yes, I understand you, Vassili Andreitch," Nikita had replied. "I understand you perfectly well, and will serve and work for you as for my own father."

Nevertheless Nikita had not been ignorant that Vassili was cheating him. He had only felt that it would be no use his trying to get a detailed account out of his master, and that, in default of another place to go to, he had better grin and bear it and take what he could get.

So, when ordered to harness the horse, Nikita proceeded to the stable in his usual cheerful, good-natured manner, and with the usual easy stride of his rather

waddling legs. There he took down from a peg the heavy headstall, with its straps and tassels, and, rattling the bit against the side-pieces, proceeded to the stall where the horse was standing which he was to get ready.

"Oh ho, so you find time long, do you, my little beauty?" he said in reply to the low whinny of welcome which greeted him from the shapely, middle-sized, low-rumped, dark-brown stallion cob which was the sole occupant of the loose-box.

"Nay, nay," he went on. "You are in a hurry to be off, I daresay, but I must water you first," (he always spoke to the animal as one might speak to a being capable of understanding human speech). Then, having wiped the sleek, though dusty and harness-galled, back of the cob with a cloth, he adjusted the headstall to the handsome young head, pulled the ears and forehead-tuft through, let down the halter, and led the animal out to drink. As soon as Brownie had picked his way gingerly out of the dung-heaped stall he grew lively and threw up his heels, pretending that he wanted to kick Nikita as the latter trotted beside him to the water-trough.

"Quiet then, quiet then, you little rascal!" exclaimed Nikita, though well aware that Brownie was taking good care to throw out his hind leg in such a manner as only to graze Nikita's greasy fur coat, not strike it direct—a trick which Nikita always admired. Having drunk his fill of cold water, the animal snorted as he stood twitching his strong, wet lips, from the hairs of which the bright, transparent drops kept dripping back into the trough. Then he stood motionless for an instant or two, as though engaged in thought, and then suddenly gave a loud neigh.

"You don't want any more. You wouldn't get it even if you did, so you needn't ask for it," said Nikita, explaining his conduct to Brownie with absolute gravity and precision. Then he set off running back to the stable, holding the spirited young cob by the halter as the animal kicked and snorted all across

the yard. None of the other workmen were about—only the cook's husband, who had come over for the festival from another village.

"Go in, will you, my boy," said Nikita to this man, "and ask which sledge I am to get ready—the big one or the little one?"

The man disappeared into the house (which was iron-roofed and stood upon a raised foundation), and returned in a moment with a message that it was the little sledge which was to be used. Meanwhile Nikita had slipped the collar over the cob's head and adjusted the brass-studded saddle-piece, and was now walking, with the light-painted *douga*[1] in one hand and the end of the cob's halter in the other, towards the two sledges standing beneath the shed.

"If the little sledge, then the little sledge," he remarked, and proceeded to back the clever little animal into the shafts (it pretending meanwhile to bite him) and, with the other man's assistance, to harness it to the vehicle. When all was ready and there remained only the reins to be put on, Nikita sent his assistant to the stable for some straw, and then to the store-house for a sack.

"There now, that will do," said Nikita as he stuffed into the sledge the freshly-cut oaten straw which the man had brought. "But nay, nay" (to Brownie). "You need not prick your ears like that!—Well, suppose we put the straw so, and the sack on the top of it. Then it will be comfortable to sit upon,"—and he suited the action to the words by tucking the edges of the sack under the straw disposed around the seat.

"Thank you, my boy," he added to the cook's husband. "Two pairs of hands work quicker than one." After that he buckled the loose ends of the reins together, mounted the splashboard, and drove the good little steed, all impatient to be off, across the frozen dung of the yard to the entrance-gates.

[1] The curved frame, fitted with bells, which surmounts the collar in Russian harness.

"Uncle Mikit, Uncle Mikit!" came the shrill little voice of a seven-year-old boy from behind him, as the youngster ran hastily out of the porch into the yard—a youngster who was dressed in a short jacket of black fur, new white bast shoes, and a cosy cap. "Let *me* get up too," he implored, fastening his jacket as he ran.

"Well, well! Come here then, my dear," said Nikita, pulling up. Then, seating his master's pale, thin little son behind him, he drove the boy, beaming with pleasure, out into the street.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon and freezing hard, the thermometer registering only ten degrees; yet the weather was dull and gusty, and fully half the sky was covered by a low, dark bank of cloud. In the courtyard the air was still, but directly one stepped into the street outside the wind became more noticeable and the snow could be seen twirling itself about in wreaths as it was swept from the roof of a neighbouring outbuilding into the corner near the bath-house. Hardly had Nikita returned through the gates and turned the cob's head towards the steps when Vassili Andreitch—a cigarette between his lips, and a sheepskin coat upon his shoulders, fastened tightly and low down with a belt—came out of the house-door upon the high, snow-trampled flight of steps, making them creak loudly under his felt boots as he did so.

Drawing the last whiff from his cigarette, he threw down the fag end and stamped it out. Then, puffing the smoke out of his moustache, he glanced at the cob as it re-entered the gates, and began to turn out the corners of his coat-collar in such a way that the fur should be next his face on either side (his face was clean-shaven, except for a moustache), and yet not liable to be fouled with his breath.

"So you have managed it, you little monkey?" he exclaimed as he caught sight of his little boy seated in the sledge. Vassili was a little animated with the wine which he had been drinking with his guests,

and therefore the more ready to approve of all that belonged to him and all that he had done in life. The aspect of his little son at that moment—of the little boy whom he intended to be his heir—afforded him the greatest satisfaction as he stood blinking at him and grinning with his long teeth. In the porch behind Vassili stood his pale, thin wife, Vassilia Andreitcha. She was *enceinte*, and had her head and shoulders muffled up in a woollen shawl, so that only her eyes were visible.

"Had not you better take Nikita with you?" she said, stepping timidly forward from the porch. Vassili returned her no answer, but merely frowned angrily as though somehow displeased at her words, and spat upon the ground.

"You see, you will be travelling with money on you," she continued in the same anxious tone. "Besides, the weather might grow worse."

"Don't I know the road, then, that I must needs have a guide with me?" burst out Vassili with that unnatural stiffening of his lips which marked his intercourse with buyers and sellers when he was particularly desirous of enunciating each syllable distinctly.

"Yes, do take him, for heaven's sake, I implore you," repeated his wife as she shifted her shawl to protect the other side of her face.

"Goodness! Why, you stick to me like a bathing-towel!" cried Vassili. "Where can I find room for him on the sledge?"

"I am quite ready to go," put in Nikita, cheerfully. "Only, someone else must feed the other horses while I am away," (this last to his mistress).

"Yes, yes, I will see to that, Nikita," she replied. "I will tell Simon to do it."

"Then I am to go with you, Vassili Andreitch?" said Nikita, expectantly.

"Well, I suppose I must humour the good lady," answered Vassili. "Only, if you go, you had better put on a rather better, not to say warmer, diplomatist's uniform than that,"—and he smiled and

winked one eye at Nikita's fur jacket, which, truth to tell, had holes under its two arms, down the back, and round the sides, besides being greasy, matted, shorn of hooks, and torn into strips round the edges.

"Here, my good fellow! Come and hold the cob, will you?" shouted Nikita across the yard to the cook's husband.

"No, no, let *me* do it," cried the little boy, drawing his small, red, frozen hands out of his pockets and catching hold of the chilly reins.

"Don't be too long over your new uniform, please," said Vassili to Nikita with a grin.

"No, no, Vassili Andreitch—I shan't be a moment," protested Nikita as he went shuffling hurriedly off in his old felt boots towards the servants' quarters across the yard.

"Now then, my good Arininshka, give me my *khalat*[1] from the stove! I am going with master!" shouted Nikita as he burst into the hut and seized his belt from a peg. The cook, who had been enjoying a good sleep after dinner and was now getting tea ready for her husband, greeted Nikita cheerfully, and, catching the infection of his haste, began to bustle about as briskly as he himself. First she took from near the stove a shabby, but well-aired, cloth *khalat*, and set about shaking and smoothing it out with all possible speed.

"*You* are far more fit to go with the master than I am," he said to the cook, in accordance with his usual habit of saying something civil to everyone with whom he came in contact. Then, twisting about him the shabby, well-worn belt, he succeeded first in compressing his not over-prominent stomach, and then in drawing the belt with a great effort over his fur coat.

"There you are!" he said (not to the cook but to the belt) as he tucked its ends in. "You can't very well burst apart like that." Then, with a hoist and much heaving of the shoulders, he drew the cloth

[1] A kind of frock-coat.

khalat over all (stretching its back well, to give looseness in the arms), and patted it into place under the arm-pits. Finally he took his mittens from a shelf.

"Now," said he, "I am all right."

"But you have forgotten about your feet," cried the cook. "Those boots are awful."

Nikita stopped as if struck by this.

"Yes, perhaps I ought to ch—" he began, but changed his mind, and exclaiming, "No, he might go without me if I did—I have not far to walk," bolted off into the yard.

"But won't you be cold in that *khalat* only, Nikita?" said his mistress when he reached the sledge.

"No indeed! How should I? It is *very* warm," answered Nikita as he disposed the straw over the forepart of the sledge in such a manner as would conceal his feet after he had mounted, and thrust the whip (not needed for so willing a steed) under the straw.

Vassili had already taken his seat, his broad back, with its double covering of furs, filling almost the entire rear part of the sledge. Then, taking up the reins, he flicked the cob with them, while Nikita jumped into the forepart of the sledge just as it started, and sat leaning forward to the left and sticking out one leg.

II

THE good little cob moved the sledge rapidly along with a light creaking of the runners as he trotted at a round pace over the well-beaten, frozen piece of road leading to the village.

"Hullo! What have *you* jumped up for?" cried Vassili, suddenly, clearly enjoying the fact that an unauthorized passenger was trying to perch himself upon the runners behind. ("Give me the whip, Nikita!" he interjected). "*I'll* thrash you, you young rascal! Run along home to your mother!"

The boy jumped off. Brownie broke into a gallop, but soon changed to a trot again.

Kresti, where Vassili lived, was a hamlet of six houses only, and when they had got beyond the blacksmith's hut at the end they at once perceived that the wind was much stronger than they had thought it to be, and that the road ahead was almost invisible. The track of the sledge became snowed over almost as fast as made, and only the fact that the road was a little higher than the ground on either side of it rendered it at all distinguishable. The snow was whirling over the whole country-side and blotting out the horizon, while the Teliatinsky forest—generally clearly visible—now showed only as a dark mass looming at intervals through the snow-dust. The wind was blowing from the left, and kept turning Brownie's mane over his thick, fat neck and blowing his feathery tail,—bound at the top in a plain knot,—across his flank. Owing to the wind, too, Nikita's tall coat-collar, where he sat on the weather side of the sledge, kept pressing itself tightly against his cheeks and nose.

"The cob can't get up much of a pace to-day; there's too much snow on the ground," said Vassili, who prided himself on the excellence of his steed. "Once I drove him to Pashutino in half an hour."

"What did you say?" asked Nikita, whose tall coat-collar had prevented him from hearing what was said.

"I said that I have driven to Pashutino in half an hour," bawled Vassili.

"That's something to boast of indeed! He's a good animal if ever there was one!" commented Nikita, after which they kept silence for a while. Vassili, however, was inclined to be talkative.

"What do you think? I told your wife the other day not to let her cooper drink all the tea," he bawled once more, in the firm conviction that Nikita must be feeling flattered at being talked to by such an important and highly-educated man as himself, as well as so greatly taken with his own joke about the cooper that it never entered into his head that the topic

might be distasteful to Nikita. However, the latter had once more failed to catch his master's words for the violence of the wind, so Vassili repeated his pleasantry at the very top of his "educated" voice.

"God be with her, Vassili Andreitch!" returned Nikita when he understood. "I never interfere with their affairs. She has given me little cause for blame, and, so long as she treats the lad well, I merely say, 'God be with her!'"

"Well, well," said Vassili, and changed the subject. "Are you going to buy a horse in the spring?" he continued.

"I only wish I could," replied Nikita as he turned his coat-collar back a little and leant over towards his master. The new topic interested him, and he wanted to catch every word. "My little lad is fast growing up and ought to learn to plough, but I have squandered all my money."

"Well, if you'll take the low-rumped nag off my hands I won't ask you much for it," said Vassili, whose spirits were rising, and who therefore recurred instinctively to his ruling passion—the passion which absorbed his whole faculties—namely, the pursuit of bargains.

"I would rather you lent me fifteen roubles and let me go and buy one in the horse-market," answered Nikita, knowing full well that the low-rumped nag which Vassili was asking him to buy was worth no more than seven roubles at the outside, but that as soon as ever Vassili had handed him over the animal he would swear that it was worth at least twenty-five, and therefore retain about half a year's wages to cover the amount.

"The horse is a splendid one," went on Vassili in his precise, businesslike tones. "I want to do you a service as well as myself. Honestly, now. Brekhunoff would never do *any* man a bad turn. I would rather be out of pocket myself than see others so. Yes, on my honour. The horse is a magnificent one."

"I am sure of it," said Nikita with a sigh. Then, finding it useless to try and listen further, he turned up his coat-collar again, and his face and ear became covered in a twinkling. For about half an hour they drove in silence. The wind kept getting down Nikita's legs and through a hole in his mitten, but he hunched his shoulders and breathed into the coat-collar muffled over his mouth, so that he did not feel the cold very much after all.

"What do you think? Shall we go round by Karamishevo or straight on?" asked Vassili presently. The road by way of Karamishevo was the longer and the rougher one, yet, on the other hand, it was clearly defined by posts on either side. The road straight on was a good deal nearer, but used by few travellers, as well as either altogether devoid of posts or marked only by small ones which would now be almost drifted over. Nikita debated matters for a moment.

"The road by Karamishevo is longer than the other one, but a good deal the easier to drive over," he decided at length.

"Yet, if we go straight on," pursued Vassili, who was inclined towards the route he named, "we have only to get into the hollow, and then we can't possibly lose our way. It will be splendid going through the forest."

"As you wish," said Nikita, and turned up his coat-collar again.

Accordingly Vassili had his way, and after driving about half a verst[1] further on, turned to the left where a tall young oak tree stood. Its branches and the few dead leaves which still clung to them were being madly dashed about by the wind, which, after the turning, met the travellers almost full in the face. Light snow began to fall, and Vassili tightened the reins, puffed out his cheeks, and let the breath escape slowly from under his moustache, while Nikita dozed. They had driven like this in

[1] The verst = about two-thirds of an English mile.

silence for about ten minutes when Vassili gave an exclamation.

"What is it?" asked Nikita, opening his eyes.

Vassili returned no answer, but twisted himself round to look back. Then he gazed ahead. The cob was still trotting along, his flanks steaming with sweat.

"What is it?" asked Nikita again.

"What is it, do you say?" cried Vassili in angry mimicry of the question. "Why, only that I can't see any posts now. We must be off the road."

"Wait a minute, then, while I go and look for it," said Nikita as he leapt lightly from the sledge and, taking the whip from beneath the straw, went ahead and towards the left—the side on which he had been sitting. The snow had not been very deep that year, so that, as yet, the road had been easily passable the whole way along; but here there were patches where it reached knee-high and smothered Nikita's boot-tops. He kept on trying the ground, both with his feet and the whip, as he walked along; yet the road had vanished.

"Well?" said Vassili when Nikita returned to the sledge.

"No road on this side," answered Nikita. "I must try the other."

"There seems to be something dark showing ahead," remarked Vassili. "Go and see what it is."

Nikita did so, and found it to be only a spot where the naked sprouts of some winter corn sown on a piece of black earth were making a dark patch on the snow as they waved before the wind. Nikita circled round to the right, and then returned to the sledge again, beat the snow from his *khalat* and boots, and remounted.

"We must go to the right," he said with decision. "The wind was on our left a moment ago, but now it is straight in our faces. Yes, to the right," he concluded with an air of conviction.

Vassili just managed to catch what he said, and

turned the cob in the direction indicated; yet no road revealed itself there, although they went on for a considerable time. Meanwhile the wind showed no signs of dropping, and the snow continued.

"Well, we are altogether lost now, Vassili Andreitch," observed Nikita, suddenly, and half as though he were pleased at the fact. "What is this, though?" he went on, pointing to a blackened potato-top which was projecting above the snow. Vassili at once stopped the cob, which was now sweating heavily and moving its stout flanks with difficulty.

"Yes, what is it?" he echoed.

"It means that we are on the Zakharovek estate. That is where we have got to."

"Surely not?" exclaimed Vassili.

"Yes, it is as I say," insisted Nikita. "You can tell, too, by the sound of the sledge-runners that we are driving over a potato-field. Look at the bits of potato-tops which they have dragged off. Yes, these are the Zakharovek market-gardens."

"A fine place to get landed in!" said Vassili. "Well, what is to be done now?"

"We must keep on going to the right, and we shall be sure to come out somewhere or other," answered Nikita. "If we don't actually strike Zakharovek we shall at all events come across some tenant's farm."

Vassili assented, and drove the cob forward in the direction Nikita had advised. They proceeded thus for a considerable time, now coming upon bare grass, now upon rough patches of frozen ground, over which the sledge went grating loudly. Then, again, they would find themselves passing over stubble of winter or spring corn, with the dead straw or sticks of weeds projecting above the snow and waving madly before the wind. More than once they found themselves labouring through deep, level, pure-white drifts, with nothing whatever showing above the top. All the while the snow-fall continued and the snow-dust whirled about the ground. The cob was evidently failing now, for his flanks were white and steaming

with sweat, and he proceeded only at a foot's pace. Suddenly he stumbled, and then plunged forward into some ditch or gully. Vassili was for pulling up, but Nikita shouted to him:

"Why stop? Go on, go on! We must get him out of this. Now then, my beauty! Now then, my pet!" he went on to the cob encouragingly as he leapt from the sledge—only to stick fast in the ditch himself. However, the cob extricated himself presently, and scrambled back onto the frozen ridge which lined the bank. Evidently it was a ditch dug out by hand.

"Where are we now?" queried Vassili.

"We must find that out," answered Nikita. "Let us push on a bit, and we shall arrive somewhere."

"Isn't that the Goviatchkinsky forest, surely?" said his master presently, pointing to something black looming through the snow ahead.

"It may be. We had better push on and find out," rejoined Nikita. As a matter of fact, he had already distinguished the oblong patches of some withered vine-leaves showing against the blackness of the object in question, and knew, therefore, that it was more likely to be a habitation of some kind than a forest; yet he hesitated to speak before he knew for certain. Sure enough, they had not proceeded more than twenty yards beyond the ditch when trees showed up clearly before them and some melancholy sound became audible. Nikita had guessed rightly. It was not a forest they had come to, but a row of tall vines, with a few withered leaves still quivering upon them. Evidently they marked the trench of a threshing-floor. Just as the travellers had almost reached these vines and could tell that the melancholy sound arose from the wind sweeping through their rustling leaves, the cob took a sudden plunge upwards with his fore hoofs, pulled up his hind-quarters after them, turned to the left, and went on with the snow no longer reaching to his knees. It was the road again!

"Now we have reached it!" exclaimed Nikita, "but the Lord only knows where!"

The cob, however, never faltered, but went straight ahead along the snow-swept road; until, just as they had covered about a hundred yards, there uprose before them the rectangular outlines of a wattled barn, with its roof piled with snow and the snow-dust blowing from it in clouds. Passing the barn, the road wound back into the wind a little, and they found themselves in a snowdrift. A short way further on could be seen an opening between two buildings, so that it was clear that the road lay through the snowdrift, and that the latter must be surmounted. Sure enough, they had no sooner accomplished this than they found themselves in a village street, in the nearest courtyard of which some frozen linen was hanging from a line and rustling distractedly in the wind. It comprised two shirts (one of them white and the other one red), a pair of drawers, some leggings, and a petticoat, of which the white shirt was particularly abandoned in its antics as it waved its sleeves before the wind.

"Ugh, the lazy woman—though I am sorry to have to say it of her!" said Nikita with a glance at the waving shirts. "To think of not getting one's linen ready for the festival!"

III

The wind was as strong at the entrance to the street as it had been in the open country, and the roadway piled with snow, but in the middle of the hamlet everything seemed warm and quiet and cheerful. A dog came barking out of a yard, while in another yard an old woman came running from somewhere, with her head swathed in a handkerchief, but stopped as she was making for the door of the hut and stood for a moment on the threshold to gaze at the new arrivals. From the middle of the village came the

sound of girls singing, and altogether there seemed to be less wind and cold and snow here than outside.

"Why, this must be Grishkino," said Vassili.

"It is," replied Nikita: and Grishkino it was.

It turned out afterwards that they had left the road upon their right, and travelled some eight versts at a tangent to their former direction—though still more or less in the direction of their proper goal. Yet Goviatchkina was fully five versts from Grishkino.

Halfway up the street they encountered a tall man walking in the centre of the roadway.

"Who are you?" he cried as he stopped. Then, recognizing Vassili, he caught hold of one of the shafts, rested his hands upon it, and climbed to the seat of the sledge. It was a friend of Vassili's named Isai, known as the worst horse-thief in the district.

"Well, and whither is God taking you now?" said Isai, suffusing Nikita with the smell of the *vodka* which he had been drinking.

"We have been trying to get to Goviatchkina."

"What a way to take, then! You should have gone by Malakhovo."

"It's no good saying what we *should* have done when we didn't do it," retorted Vassili as he pulled up the cob.

"That is a good animal," remarked Isai, looking the cob over, and passing his hand under the now drooping stump of its stout, knotted tail in his usual horsey manner. "Are you going to stay the night here?"

"No, my friend. We have further to go yet."

"You had much better stay. But who is this? Why, if it isn't Nikita Stepanitch!"

"Yes, no one else," replied Nikita. "But pray tell us, brother, how to avoid losing our way again."

"How to avoid losing your way again? Why, turn back, go right along the street, and the road is

straight in front of you. Don't turn to the left, but keep on until you come nearly to a large village, and then—to the right."

"But whereabouts is the turning near that village?" asked Nikita again. "Is it on the summer or the winter road?"

"The winter. You will come to a copse there, and exactly opposite the copse there stands a tall, ragged oaken post. That is where you are to turn off."

Accordingly Vassili turned the cob's head round, and drove off down the street again.

"You had better have stayed the night here," shouted Isai after them, but Vassili shook up the cob and returned no answer. To cover five versts of level road, of which two would run through forest, seemed an easy enough prospect, especially in view of the fact that the snow now seemed to them to have ceased and the wind to have dropped.

Passing from the street again, with its roadway trampled hard and showing black here and there with patches of fresh dung, they drove past the yard where the linen was hanging out to dry (the white shirt had now partly torn away from the line and was dangling by one frozen sleeve only), and went on until they came to the vine-stocks with their quaintly murmuring leaves. Here they were in the open country again—only to discover that the blizzard had in no way abated, but rather, on the contrary, increased. The road was drifted over ahead, and nothing but the posts alongside could keep them from leaving it. These posts, too, were difficult to distinguish, since the wind was head on.

Vassili knit his brows as he bent forward to watch for the posts, but gave the cob more rein than before, and trusted to its sagacity. Sure enough, the cob never faltered, but went on turning to the left or right, according to the windings of the road, and feeling for it with his hoofs; so that, despite the fact that the wind kept rising and the snow falling ever

thicker and thicker, the posts remained plainly visible on either side.

They had been driving like this for about ten minutes when there suddenly loomed up something black in front of the cob—something which was moving along in a tangled whirl of wind-driven snow. It was a party of fellow-travellers whom Brownie had outpaced, and the back of whose sledge he had actually struck into with his fore-hoofs.

"Pull out! Hi! Look out in front of you!" came in a chorus of shouts from this vehicle, and Vassili pulled out accordingly. In the sledge were seated three *muzhiks* and an old woman. Evidently they were guests returning from the village festival. One of the men was lashing the snow-covered flanks of their pony with a dry branch, his two comrades were shouting and gesticulating at one another in the forepart of the sledge, and the old woman—muffled up and white over with snow—was seated motionless at the back.

"Whose men are you?" shouted Vassili.

"A-a-a-skie!" was all that could be heard in answer.

"Eh?"

"A-a-a-skie!" repeated one of the *muzhiks* at the top of his voice, but it was impossible to distinguish precisely what he said.

"Lay on! Don't give way to them!" shouted another to the one belabouring the pony with the branch.

"You are returning from the festival, I suppose?"

"They are gaining, they are gaining! Lay on, Semka! Pull out, you! Lay on!"

The sledges kept bumping against each other, almost interlocking, and then parting again, until finally the *muzhik's* sledge began to be overhauled. Their shaggy, fat-bellied, snow-covered pony, blowing heavily under its low *douga*, and evidently frantic (though in vain) to escape from the flagellation of the dry branch, kept shuffling along on its stumpy

legs through the deep snow, although at times they almost gave way beneath it. Its muzzle—that, apparently, of a young animal, with its lower lip projecting like a fish's, the nostrils distended, and the ears laid back in terror—kept level with Nikita's shoulder for a few seconds, and then began to drop behind.

"That's what drink will make men do," observed Nikita. "The pony will be ruined by treatment like that. What Asiatic brutes the fellows are!"

For several minutes the sobbing of the distressed pony's nostrils could be heard behind them, as well as the drunken shouts of the *muzhiks*. Then the first sound died away, and presently the second also. Nothing whatever was to be heard now except the whistling of the wind in the travellers' ears and an occasional faint scrape of the runners over patches which the wind had swept bare.

This contest with the rival sledge had cheered and enlivened Vassili, so that he drove the cob with greater assurance than ever, and without watching for the posts at all—leaving matters, in fact, to the cob entirely. Nikita also had nothing to do, so that, as usual with him when thus situated, he fell into a doze, in order to make up for arrears of sleep at other times. Suddenly the cob stopped short, almost pitching Nikita forward out of the sledge.

"We have gone wrong again," said Vassili.

"How do you know?"

"Because there are no posts to be seen. We must have left the road."

"Well, if we have, I must look for it again," remarked Nikita abruptly as he got out and began to trudge about the snow, stepping as lightly as possible on the balls of his splayed-out feet. He kept this up for a long time—now disappearing from view, now reappearing, now vanishing again—and then returned.

"No road there," he remarked as he mounted the sledge. "It must be somewhere ahead."

The dusk was now coming on, and although the blizzard had not increased it also had not lessened.

"If only we could hear those *muzhiks!*" sighed Vassili.

"They won't overtake us now," replied Nikita, "for we must have left the road a long way back. Perhaps they have done the same," he added, as an afterthought.

"Well, which way now?" inquired Vassili.

"Give the cob his head," advised Nikita, "and perhaps he will take us right. Here, give me the reins."

Vassili relinquished them none the less readily because his hands were half frozen in their warm mittens. Nikita took the reins, but let them lie quite passively in his fingers, endeavouring not to give them the slightest twitch. In fact, he took keen pleasure in thus trying the intelligence of his favourite. Sure enough, after pricking his ears first to the one side and then to the other, the clever animal started to turn round.

"He can almost speak!" cried Nikita. "My word, how well he knows what to do! On you go, then! On with you! Tchk, tchk!"

The wind was now at their backs again, and it seemed warmer.

"Ah, what a knowing fellow he is!" went on Nikita, delighted with his pet. "Kirghizenok is strong enough, of course, but an absolute fool; whereas this fellow—well, see what he found out with his ears alone! No need of telegraphs for him, when he can smell out a road a verst away!"

And, indeed, less than half an hour later a black object—either a wood or a village—began to loom ahead, while the posts reappeared on their right, placing it beyond doubt that the travellers had hit the road once more.

"If this isn't Grishkino again!" exclaimed Nikita suddenly.

And Grishkino it was. On their left showed the

barn with the snow-dust blowing from its roof, while further on could be seen the clothes-line, with its burden of shirts and drawers still fluttering in the wind. Once again they drove up the street and found everything grow suddenly quiet and warm and cheerful. Once again the miry roadway appeared, voices and singing became audible, and the dog barked as before. The dusk, however, was now so far advanced that lights could be seen gleaming in some of the windows.

Half-way up the street Vassili turned the cob's head towards a large hut with a double coping of bricks, and pulled up at the steps. Nikita approached the gleaming, snow-encrusted window, in the light of which the dancing snowflakes glittered brightly, and knocked at a pane with the butt-end of his whip.

"Who is there?" cried a voice in answer to Nikita's summons.

"The Brekhunoffs from Kresti, brother," replied Nikita. "Please let us in."

Someone could be heard moving away from the window, and in another two minutes the sound of the inner door opening with a wrench. Then the latch of the outer door rattled, and there came out a tall old white-bearded *muzhik*, holding the door half-closed behind him to keep the wind from blowing into the hut. He was clad in a fur coat, hastily thrown over a white holiday shirt, while behind him stood a young fellow in a red shirt and tall boots.

"How is it with you, Andreitch?" inquired the old man.

"We have lost our way, my friend," replied Vassili. "We tried to get to Goviatchkina, but landed here. Then we set off again, and have just missed the road for the second time."

"But how came you to go wrong?" asked the old man. "Here, Petrushka"—and he turned to the young fellow in the red shirt—"go and open the yard-gates."

"Certainly," responded the youngster cheerfully, and ran forward out of the porch.

"No, no. We must not stop the night," interposed Vassili.

"But where can you be going now? It is nearly dark. You had much better stay here."

"I should have been only too glad to do so, but I simply cannot. Business, you see, my friend—and business won't wait."

"Then at least come in and warm yourselves with some tea," said the old man.

"Yes, we might do that," replied Vassili. "The night won't grow any darker than it is now, for the moon will soon be rising. Shall we go in and warm ourselves, Nikita?"

"Yes, I could do with something to warm me," replied Nikita, who was desperately cold, and only too eager to thaw his frozen limbs before a stove.

Vassili thereupon entered the hut with the old man, while Nikita drove the sledge through the yard-gates, duly opened for him by Petrushka. Under the latter's guidance he then led the cob under the roof of a shed. The shed was heaped high with dung, so that the cob's lofty *douga* caught upon a beam; whereupon the cock and hens which were roosting there were moved to uneasy flutterings and scratchings of their claws, some sheep darted away in terror, with much pattering of their hoofs over the frozen dung, and a dog whined loudly, then growled in angry alarm, and finally barked at the intruder in puppy fashion.

Nikita had a word for them all. He begged the hens' pardon, and quieted them by saying that he would not disturb them further; chided the sheep for their unreasoning nervousness; and never ceased to make overtures to the dog as he tied up his steed.

"We shall be all right now," he said as he beat the snow from his clothes. "Hush, then, how he growls!" he added to the dog. "It is all right now. Quiet, then, stupid! Be quiet! You are only disturbing yourself for nothing. We are not thieves."

"They are what we might call our three domestic councillors," remarked Petrushka as he drew the sledge under the shed with his powerful hands.

"Why 'councillors'?" asked Nikita.

"Because," said Petrushka, with a smile, "you will find it written in Paulson's book: 'When a thief is sneaking up to a house the dog barks out in his own language—Wake up! the cock sings out—Get up! and the cat starts washing herself—meaning thereby to say: A guest is at hand, so let us be ready to receive him!'"

Petrushka, it seemed, was of a literary turn, and knew by heart the only book which he possessed—some book or other by Paulson. He was particularly fond of it when he had had a little to drink—as now—and would quote such extracts from it as might seem to him to fit the occasion.

"That is just right," observed Nikita.

"Yes, isn't it?" answered Petrushka. "But you are simply frozen. Shall I take you in to tea now, my boy?"

"Yes, by all means," replied Nikita, and they crossed the yard to the hut door.

IV

The homestead where Vassili had pulled up was one of the richest in the village, for the family held no less than five lots of land, as well as rented some, while in the stables stood six horses, three cows, two draught-bullocks, and a flock of twenty sheep. In all, there lived around the courtyard of the homestead twenty-two souls—namely, four married sons, six grandchildren (of whom one—Petrushka—was married), two great-grandchildren, three orphans, and four daughters-in-law, with their children. In addition to these there were two sons employed as water-carriers in Moscow, while a third was in the army. At the present moment there were at home only the

old man, his wife, the second of the married sons, the elder of the two sons who worked at Moscow (come over for the festival), the various wives and children, and a neighbouring gossip.

It was one of those rare households which are still to be found undivided, yet one in which there were already at work those deep-rooted internal dissensions which generally originate among the women of a family, and which would break up this family also in time.

Over the table in the hut there hung a shaded lamp, throwing a clear light upon the crockery below, upon a bottle of *vodka*, and upon sundry viands, as well as over the clay walls of the room. In one corner—the "corner beautiful"—there hung some *ikons*, with pictures on either side of them. In the place of honour at the table sat Vassili, stripped now to his black under-jacket, and chewing his frozen moustache as he gazed round the hut and at those about him with his prominent, hawklike eyes. Next to him sat the bald, white-bearded head of the family (dressed in a white shirt of home manufacture), while, further on, were the son who had come over from Moscow for the festival (straight-backed, square-shouldered, and wearing a similar shirt to his father's, but of finer material), a second square-shouldered son (the eldest of those living at home), and, lastly, the neighbour—a red-haired, lanky *muzhik*.

These *muzhiks* had had their supper and *vodka*, and were just about to drink tea when the travellers arrived. Consequently, the *samovar* on the floor by the stove was already boiling. Near the stove, also, and in shelf-bunks could be seen various children, while the old woman—her face covered in every direction with fine wrinkles, furrowing even her lips—bustled about behind Vassili. As Nikita entered the hut she was just taking her guest some *vodka*, which she had poured out into a tumbler of thick glass.

"You must not refuse it, Vassili Andreitch," she said. "No, you really must not. You need some-

thing to refresh you. Drink it down, my dear sir."

Nikita found himself greatly excited by the smell of the *vodka*—especially now that he was so cold and hungry. He knit his brows and, shaking the snow from his hat and *khalat*, halted for a moment before the *ikons*, with his eyes turned away from the company. He crossed himself three times and made a genuflexion, after which he turned first to his host and saluted him, then to those present at the table, and then to the women standing by the stove. Finally, with a general greeting of "A merry festival to you all!" he started to take off his *khalat*—though still without looking at the table.

"But you are frozen all over, my brother!" cried the eldest brother as he stared at Nikita's snow-caked eyes, beard and face. For answer, Nikita divested himself of his *khalat*, shook it out, and hung it over the stove; after which he at length approached the table. Offered *vodka*, he had almost taken the glass and tilted the fragrant, shining liquor into his mouth, when he glanced at Vassili and remembered the pawned boots, as well as the cooper and the young son for whom he had promised to buy a horse in the spring. So he ended by declining the *vodka* with a sigh.

"I would rather not drink it, I thank you humbly," he said with knitted brows, and seated himself on a bench by the window.

"But why?" asked the eldest brother.

"Because I would rather not, I would rather not," Nikita replied without raising his eyes as he squinted down at his short beard and moustache and thawed the icicles out of them.

"It does not suit him," put in Vassili, smacking his lips over a cracknel washed down with *vodka*.

"Well, give me the tea-pot, then," said the kindly old woman. "I will get you some tea, for you must be frozen. Why are you so long with the *samovar*, my good women?"

"It is quite ready," retorted one of the younger

ones as she wiped the covered *samovar* with a napkin. Then, raising it with some difficulty, she came and plumped it down on the table.

Meanwhile, Vassili had been relating how he and his companion had missed their way, wandered about, fallen in with the drunken *muzhiks*, and twice returned to the village. His hosts marvelled at the story, and then went on to explain how and where they had gone wrong, who the drunken *muzhiks* had been, and the route which Vassili and Nikita must take when they set off again.

"Why, even a child could find the way as far as Moltchanovka," said the neighbour; "and, once there, you only have to hit the turning near the village. You will see a copse there. To think that you never got so far!"

"But hadn't you better stay the night here?" put in the old woman, persuasively. "The women shall get you a bed ready."

"Yes, do so, for if you were to get lost again it might be a terrible business," added her husband.

"No, no, I really cannot, my good friend," replied Vassili. "Business is business. Delay an hour, and you lose a year," he added, remembering the timber and the rival buyers who might forestall him. "Shall we go now?" (this last to Nikita).

Nikita returned no answer for a moment, and seemed absorbed in the task of thawing out his beard and moustache. At length he muttered gruffly:

"It would hardly do to get lost again, would it?"

As a matter of fact, he was gruff because he wanted the *vodka* so badly, and the only thing which would assuage that yearning of his was tea—which he had not yet been offered.

"But we need only to reach that turning," protested Vassili, "and we simply *can't* lose our way afterwards. From there onwards it will be all forest road."

"Well, it is for you to say, Vassili Andreitch," said Nikita as he took the tumbler of tea now proffered him. "If we must go, we must, that's all."

"Drink up the tea, then, and quick march."

Nikita said no more (although he shook his head disapprovingly), but poured the tea out carefully into the saucer and began to warm his work-swollen fingers in the steam. Then, having bitten off a crumb from his lump of sugar, he bowed to his hosts, said "A good health to you all!" and poured the grateful liquid down his throat.

"If only we had someone to guide us to the turning!" sighed Vassili.

"That could be managed," said the eldest brother. "Petrushka could harness a horse and go with you as far as that."

"Harness up, then, brother, and my best thanks to you," exclaimed Vassili.

"And to you also, good sir," said the hospitable old woman. "We have been only too pleased to see you."

"Petrushka, off you go and harness the mare," ordered the eldest brother.

"Very well," replied Petrushka smilingly as he seized his cap from a peg and departed.

Whilst the horses were being got ready the conversation passed to the subject which had been interrupted when Vassili drove up to the window. It seemed that the old man had been complaining to the neighbour (who was also the local *starosta*[1]) about his third son, who had sent him no gift for the festival, but had given his wife a French shawl.

"The young people are getting out of hand nowadays," said the old man.

"Indeed they are!" agreed the neighbour. "There is no living with them. They are growing much too clever. Look at Demotchkin, who broke his father's arm the other day—all through his being too clever, of course!"

Nikita kept listening and looking from one to the other of the speakers' faces with an evident desire to join in the conversation, but he was too full of tea to

[1] The village headman.

do so, and therefore merely nodded his head approvingly at intervals. He had drunk tumbler after tumbler of tea, until he had grown warmer and warmer and more and more good-humoured. The conversation lasted for quite a long time on this subject—on the evil of dividing up families—and proved too absorbing to be successfully diverted, so that in time it passed to the dissensions in this particular household—to the separation which the second son (who had been sitting by meanwhile and maintaining a sullen silence) was demanding. Evidently it was a moot point, and the question above all others which was exercising the household, yet politeness had hitherto prevented the family from discussing such a private affair before strangers. At length, however, the old man could not forbear, and with tears in his voice went on to say that, so long as he lived, he would never permit the separation; that he maintained his household to the glory of God; and that, once it were divided, it would become scattered all over the world.

"Yes, that is what happened to the Matvieffs," observed the neighbour. "They were a comfortable household once, but separated—and now not a single one of them has anything left."

"That is what you desire for *us*, I suppose?" said the old man, turning to his son.

The son returned no answer, and an awkward silence ensued until interrupted by Petrushka, who had duly harnessed his horse and been back in the hut for some minutes past, smiling the whole time.

"It reminds me of a fable in Paulson," he said. "A father gave his son a broom to tear across. None of them could tear it: but, twig by twig—well, that was easy enough. So also it will be in our case," he added with a broad smile. "But I am quite ready to start now."

"Then, if you are ready, let us be off," said Vassili. "About that separation, good grandfather—do not

give in. It is *you* who have made the household, and therefore it should be *you* who are master of it. If necessary, refer the matter to the *mirovoi*.[1] He would settle it for you."

"But to behave like this, to behave like this!" cried the old man, with unrestrained grief. "There is no living with them. It is the Devil's doing entirely."

Meanwhile Nikita, his fifth tumbler of tea swallowed, had placed the empty glass by his side instead of returning it, in the hope that he would be given a sixth. But there was no more water left in the *samovar*, and so the hostess brewed no more tea, while Vassili was already putting his fur coat on. Accordingly, there being nothing else for it, Nikita rose, replaced his lump of sugar (which he had nibbled on every side) in the sugar-basin, wiped his perspiring face with the lappet of his jacket, and went to put on his *khalat*. This done, he sighed heavily. Then he thanked and took leave of his hosts, and left the warm, bright living-room for the cold, dark porch, which was rattling with the wind which hurtled through it and which had drifted the snow through the chinks of the quaking outer door until it lay in heaps upon the floor. Thence he passed into the dark courtyard.

Petrushka, clad in a sheepskin jacket, was standing by his horse in the middle of the yard and smilingly quoting some verses from Paulson:

> "The lowering tempest hides the sky,
> The whirlwind brings the driving snow;
> Now like a wild beast it doth cry,
> Now like a child it whimpers low."

Nikita nodded his head approvingly and unhooked the reins, while the old man brought a lantern into the porch to guide Vassili to the sledge. He tried to light him with it, but it was blown out in a twinkling. Even in the yard it was easy to tell that the storm was worse than ever.

"What fearful weather!" thought Vassili to himself. "Perhaps we shall never get there. However,

[1] The local magistrate.

there is business to be thought of. Besides, I have got myself ready now, and my host's horse has been put in. God send we get there, though!"

The old man likewise was thinking that it would be better for them not to set out, but he had already tried to dissuade them, and they had not listened to him. It would be no use asking them again.

"Perhaps, too, it is only old age which makes me so nervous, and they will arrive safely," he thought. "Let us ourselves at least go to bed in the meanwhile. Enough of talking for to-night."

Petrushka, at all events, had no thought of danger. He knew the road and the whole neighbourhood too well for that. Moreover, he had been greatly put upon his mettle by the couplet about the whirlwind and the snow, which seemed to him to describe with extraordinary exactness what was to be seen in the yard. As for Nikita, he had no wish to go at all, but he had been too long accustomed not to have his own way and to serve others; so that in the end there was no one to prevent them from setting out.

V

Vassili walked through the porch, peered about in the darkness till he discerned where the sledge was, took the reins, and climbed in.

"All right in front!" he cried. Petrushka, kneeling in his own sledge, started his horse, and Brownie, with a loud neigh as he scented the mare in front of him, dashed away after her. They issued thus into the village street, passed the outskirts, and took the same road as before—the road which ran past the yard with the frozen linen (although the linen was quite invisible now), past the barn heaped with snow, and from the gables of which a cloud of snow-dust kept blowing, and past the bending vines with their mysterious murmurings and pipings. Then once more the travellers were launched upon a

sea of snow, which raged both above and below them. The wind was so strong that when it was upon their flank and their wrappings filled before it, it actually careened the sledge to one side and threw the cob out of his stride. Petrushka kept shouting encouragement as he drove his stout mare ahead of them, while the cob followed her closely.

After about ten minutes' driving, Petrushka turned aside and shouted something, but neither Vassili nor Nikita could tell what he said for the sound of the wind. They guessed, however, that they had reached the turning. Sure enough, Petrushka had wheeled to the right, and the wind, which had hitherto been chiefly on their flank, now met them full in the face, whilst something could be seen showing black through the snow on their right hand. It was the copse which marked the turning.

"God go with you!" cried Petrushka.

"Thank you, thank you, Petrushka!"

"The lowering tempest hides the sky," shouted the lad once more, and vanished.

"Goodness, what a poetry-spouter!" remarked Vassili as he started the cob again.

"Yes, he is a fine young fellow, a real honest *muzhik*," returned Nikita, and they went on. In order not to squander the warmth engendered by the tea which he had drunk in the hut, Nikita wrapped himself up well, hunched his shoulders until his short beard covered his throat, and sat perfectly silent. In front of him he could see the two dark lines of the shafts forever cheating his eye, and looking to him like the ruts of a beaten road; the cob's tossing flank and knotted, wind-blown tail; and, further ahead, the animal's lofty *douga*, nodding head and neck, and dishevelled mane. At intervals posts would leap into sight, and he would know that the sledge was still keeping the road and that there was nothing for him to do. Vassili held the reins loosely, leaving it to the cob to guide himself. Nevertheless, although Brownie had had a long rest in the village, he went

unwillingly, and as though he would like to turn aside at any moment, so that Vassili frequently had to straighten him again.

"There goes a post on the right—two—three," counted Vassili. "And there is the forest in front," he went on to himself as he gazed at something showing dark ahead of them. However, what had seemed to him a forest proved to be only a bush. This they passed, and had covered another fifty yards or so—when, behold! there was neither forest nor a fourth post to be seen!

"Never mind; we shall be at the forest in a moment," thought Vassili as, excited by the *vodka* and tea, he jerked the reins again instead of pulling up. The willing, docile animal obeyed and, now at an amble and now at a moderate trot, went whither he was driven, although he knew that it was in the wrong direction. Another ten minutes passed, and still there was no forest.

"We have missed the road again!" exclaimed Vassili, at last pulling up. Without speaking, Nikita descended from the sledge, and, after tucking up his *khalat*, which sometimes clung to him and sometimes flapped up and down, according to the strength of the gusts of wind, began to flounder about over the snow. First he tried the one side, and then the other, and thrice vanished altogether. At last, however, he returned, and took the reins from Vassili's hands.

"We must go towards the right," he said brusquely and decisively as he turned the cob in that direction.

"Very well; if to the right, to the right," agreed Vassili as he surrendered the reins and thrust his numbed hands up his sleeves. Nikita said nothing more beyond crying, "Now do your best, my pet!" to the cob. Nevertheless, the animal moved forward only at a foot's pace, in spite of all Nikita's shaking of the reins. The snow was knee-deep in places, and the sledge moved through it in jerks with each stride of the animal. Presently Nikita took up the whip, which had been hanging over the splash-board, and

used it once; whereupon the good cob, unused to its lash, plunged forward and broke into a trot —only, however, to subside again into an alternative amble and walk. They proceeded thus for about five minutes. It was so dark, and there was such a swirl of snow both around them and on the ground, that it was scarcely possible for them even to see the cob's *douga*. Sometimes, indeed, it was almost as though the sledge were standing still and the ground gliding backwards from it.

Suddenly the cob stopped short, as though he had scented something in front of him. Nikita threw down the reins and leapt lightly out, in order to go to the cob's head and see what he was jibbing at; but hardly had he taken a single stride ahead of the animal when his legs shot up and he rolled down some steep declivity.

"Phew, phew, phew!" he kept exclaiming all the time he was descending and trying in vain to stop himself, but his course was only arrested when his legs ploughed their way into a deep snowdrift at the bottom, while, shaken by his struggles, the drift overhanging the bank above him descended upon his head and crammed a large portion of its mass down the back of his neck.

"What a one you are, then!" said Nikita, reproachfully, both to the snowdrift and to the ravine, as he attempted to shake the snow out of his coat-collar.

"Nikita, Nikita!" came in a shout from Vassili above, but Nikita sent no answering call. He was too busy for that, for he was employing all his energies in shaking himself and searching for the whip, which had rolled away somewhere while he was shooting down the declivity. Having found it at last, he tried to reascend at the spot where he had come down, but found it impossible to do so, since he merely slid back with each successive attempt; so that finally he was forced to proceed along the bottom to find a way out. Nevertheless, only a few yards from the point where he had descended he found a place where he managed

to creep up on all fours, after which he began to walk along the edge towards the spot where he judged the cob to be. Both cob and sledge were wholly invisible, but inasmuch as he was walking against the wind, he could hear Vassili's shouts and Brownie's welcoming neigh some moments before he actually caught sight of them.

"I am coming, I am coming," he exclaimed. "Why make such a fuss about it?"

It was not until he was almost upon the sledge that he was able to distinguish the cob, with Vassili standing beside it—the latter looming very large in the obscurity.

"How the devil did you manage to lose yourself?" began his master, angrily. "We must turn back and at least try to return to Grishkino."

"I should be only too glad," retorted Nikita. "But which way are we to go? If we fall into this ravine we might never get out of it again. I myself have just found it pretty hard to do so."

"Yet we cannot stay here, can we? We *must* go *some*where," retorted Vassili.

Nikita said nothing, but sat down on the rim of the sledge, pulled off his boots, and shook out the snow which had collected in them. That done, he gathered up a handful of straw and carefully plugged a hole in the left one.

Vassili also said nothing, as though he meant now to leave everything to Nikita. When the latter had finished pulling on his boots again, he tucked his legs onto the sledge, put on his mittens, took up the reins, and turned the cob parallel to the ravine. They had not gone more than a hundred yards, however, before the animal pulled up short. In front of them lay the ravine again!

Once more Nikita got out and went probing about over the snow. He was absent for some time, but at length reappeared on the opposite side of the sledge to that which he had started from.

"Are you there, Andreitch?" he shouted.

"Yes," replied Vassili. "Well, what now?"

"There is no getting out this way; it is too dark, and there are too many ravines about. We must try driving back against the wind."

After doing so for a little while they stopped, and Nikita once more alighted and went creeping about over the snow. Then he remounted, but only to alight again almost immediately; until at length he came to a halt by the sledge in a perfectly breathless condition.

"Well, what?" inquired Vassili.

"Only that I am fairly done, and the cob nearly so too."

"What are we to do, then?"

"Wait a minute." Nikita departed again, but returned in a moment or two.

"Keep close behind me," he cried as he walked on before the cob. Vassili had now ceased to give orders, but humbly obeyed Nikita's directions.

"This way—after me," cried the latter again as he turned sharply to the right and, taking Brownie by the head, led him downwards towards a snowdrift. The cob held back at first, and then made a plunge forward as though to leap the snowdrift. Failing in the attempt, he sank in up to the collar.

"Get out of the sledge," cried Nikita to Vassili, who had retained his seat meanwhile. Then, grasping one of the shafts, he exerted all his strength to help the cob to drag the sledge out of the drift.

"Pull, my pet!" he cried to Brownie. "One good pull and the thing is done. Now, now! Just one good pull!"

The cob made a brave effort, and yet another, but, failing to extricate himself, settled down as though to reflect upon the situation.

"Come, come, my pet; this won't do," Nikita adjured Brownie. "Now then, once again!" and he tugged at the shaft on his side, while Vassili tugged at the other. The cob shook his head for a moment,

and then plunged forward suddenly in another attempt.

"That's it! You're not going to be buried this time, eh?" cried Nikita, encouragingly.

Another plunge—a second—a third—and the cob had cleared the drift and stopped short, shaking himself all over and breathing heavily. Nikita was for dragging the sledge a little further yet, but Vassili was so exhausted with the weight of his two heavy coats that he gave up and climbed in again.

"Let me rest a minute," he said, as he loosened the handkerchief which he had wound round his coat-collar before leaving the village.

"Very well; there is no great hurry," returned Nikita. "Sit still, and I will lead the cob."

Accordingly Vassili remained in the sledge, while Nikita led the animal forward for about ten yards, down a slope, then up again a little way, and finally came to a halt.

The spot where he had done so was not actually in the ravine itself, where the snow blowing off the hillocks and accumulating might have buried them entirely, but in a spot partly sheltered by the lee side of the ravine. Occasionally the wind seemed to drop a little, but it was not for long; whilst, as if to make up for such lulls, the blizzard would increase ten-fold after they were over, and tear and swirl around the travellers more cruelly than ever. One of these violent gusts struck the sledge just as Vassili was descending from it to go and take counsel with Nikita as to what they should do next, with the result that they could only cower down without speaking until the fury of the squall was spent. As for Brownie, he flattened his ears and shook his head in disgust. When the squall had abated a little, Nikita took off his mittens, tucked them into his belt, blew upon his hands, and set to work to unfasten the bow-rein from the *douga*.

"Why are you doing that?" asked Vassili.

"Because there is nothing else to be done," replied

Nikita, though half-apologetically. "I am absolutely tired out now."

"Then aren't we going to try and get any further?"

"No, for we are only exhausting the cob for nothing," said Nikita, pointing to the animal where it stood patiently waiting for what might be required of it, yet scarcely able to hold itself upright on its stout, sweat-belathered flanks. "Brownie is willing enough, but he can hardly stand on his legs. There is nothing for it but to spend the night here."

Nikita said this as if he were proposing to put up in an inn-yard, and went on unfastening the collar-thong until the two clasps of the collar fell apart.

"But we shall freeze to death here!" cried Vassili.

"Well? What if we do? It cannot be helped," was all that Nikita vouchsafed to reply.

VI

Vassili was warm enough in his two heavy coats, especially after his exertions in the snowdrift. Yet, for all that, the frost seemed to breathe down his back when he understood that they had to spend the night there. To calm his apprehensions, he sat down in the sledge and pulled out his matches and cigarettes.

Meanwhile Nikita unharnessed the cob. He undid the belly-band and saddle-piece, ran the reins out, unfastened the traces, and took off the *douga*, talking cheerily to the animal the while.

"Out you come, out you come," he said as he led it out of the shafts. "Let me take off your bit and tie you up here, and then you shall have some straw." He suited the action to the word. "Eat away, and you will feel all the better for it."

Nevertheless, Brownie did not seem to grow easier under Nikita's touch, but kept fidgeting about as he stood tail onwards to the wind. Every moment he

would shift his legs, press up to the sledge, and rub his head against Nikita's sleeve. However, as if unwilling to seem churlish about the meal of straw which Nikita had strewn before his nose, he took an occasional straw from the sledge, but appeared at once to come to the conclusion that straw did not meet the case, and threw it down again; whereupon the wind caught it in a twinkling, whirled it away, and buried it in the snow.

"Suppose we make a signal of distress," said Nikita, presently. He turned the sledge a little towards the wind, tied the shafts together with the belly-band, turned them up, and rested them against the splashboard.

"Now, if anyone passes this way they will be able to see us by the shafts, and come and dig us out. I learnt that trick from the old people," and he clapped his mittens together and put them on.

Meanwhile Vassili had unhooked his fur coat and made a shelter of its skirts. Then he struck match after match against the steel match-box, but his hands were shaking so violently with the cold that each successive match either failed to light at all or was blown out by the wind as he was in the act of lifting it to his cigarette. At length a match did flare up properly, illuminating for a brief second the pelt of his fur coat, his hand with the gold ring on its curved index finger, and the snow-covered straw which projected from under the sacking. The cigarette lighted, he drew a couple of greedy whiffs, swallowed the smoke, and puffed it out again through his moustache. Then he was about to take a third whiff, when the wind caught the lighted end of the cigarette and carried it away to join the wisps of straw!

Nevertheless, even these meagre mouthfuls of smoke had exercised a cheering effect upon him. "If we *must* spend the night here, well, we must, that's all," he said undauntedly. "Wait a moment and I will rig up a flag."

Picking up the handkerchief which he had unwound from his neck and thrown down upon the floor of the sledge, he took off his mittens, climbed onto the splashboard, stretched himself on tiptoe to reach the belly-band, and tied the handkerchief round one end of it and of the shaft in a stout knot. The handkerchief at once began to wave wildly—now clinging to the shaft, now suddenly filling out again and straining at the knot as its folds cracked in the wind.

"Is not that clever of me?" said Vassili as he stepped down again, much pleased with his handiwork. "Now, if we could lie together, that would be the warmest way, but I'm afraid that there isn't room for both of us."

"Never mind; I will find a place for myself," answered Nikita. "Only, I must cover the cob over first, for he has been sweating a lot and is tired out. Wait a minute"—and, diving into the sledge, he dragged the sacking from under Vassili. Possessed of this, he folded it double, and, removing the saddle-piece and crupper from Brownie's back, covered him over.

"You will be warmer like this, little fool," he said as he replaced the saddle-piece and crupper. "And now," he added to Vassili, "I will take the apron if you don't want it to-night. Give me some straw, too," and, thus taking one thing and another from beneath Vassili, he went to the back of the sledge, dug a hole in the snow there, and lined it with straw. Then he pulled his cap over his eyes, wrapped his *khalat* about him, with the apron over all, and squatted down upon the straw with his back resting against the bark tail-board of the sledge, that it might protect him from the wind and snow.

Vassili shook his head in disapproval of Nikita's proceedings (it was contrary to his habit to encourage the peasantry in their rude, uncouth ways), and then set about making his own preparations for the night. First of all, he smoothed out what straw was left in the sledge, padding it a little thicker where his thigh-

bone was to rest. Then he pulled on his mittens and lay down with his head in one of the corners near the splashboard, that the latter might protect him from the wind.

Somehow he did not feel sleepy, but lay thinking. He thought chiefly of the one thing which constituted his whole pride, ideal, aim and joy in life—namely, the making of money, and yet more money. He thought of the means by which certain acquaintances of his had made their money, how they were using it, and the means by which he, like they, might make a great deal more than he already possessed. The purchase of the Goviatchkinsky forest seemed to him a matter of vast importance, since out of this forest he hoped to make, at one stroke, a sum, possibly, of ten thousand roubles. He mentally reckoned up the value of the timber which he had viewed in the autumn, and on the basis of the two *dessiatins*[1] he had then inspected went on to calculate the whole.

"The oak-wood will do for sledge-runners if cut up, and for beams as they stand," he said to himself. "And after they are felled there should be left about 30 *sazhens*[2] of firewood to the *dessiatin*." Thus calculating, he could see that the total value of the forest worked out at about 12,000 roubles, but could not reckon to an exact figure in the absence of tables. "All the same," he went on, "I am not going to give even so much as 10,000 for it—only 8000—and that subject to deductions for open spaces. I will grease the surveyor's palm with a hundred roubles, or perhaps a hundred and fifty, and he will measure me off the clearings at at least five *dessiatins*. Yes, the owner will be glad to let the forest go at 8000 roubles. I have 3000 ready for him here," thought Vassili as he felt for his pocket-book with the inside of his fore-arm; "and that should melt him. How on earth we came to miss that turning God only knows. There must be a forest and a forest-keeper somewhere about there.

[1] The dessiatin = 2⅝ acres. [2] The sazhen = 7 English feet.

His dog ought to have heard us. The cursed brutes never bark when they're wanted to."

He turned back his coat-collar from his ear and listened. Nothing was to be heard but the whistling of the wind, the rustling and cracking of the handkerchief on the shafts, and the swish of the snow as it lashed the bark sides of the sledge. He covered his ear over again.

"If only I had known that we should have to spend the night here!" he thought. "Well, we shall get there to-morrow, all the same. It will only mean one day lost. Besides, those other fellows wouldn't come either—not in such weather."

Suddenly he remembered that on the 9th of the month he was to be paid some money for wethers by the butcher.

"I ought to be back by then to receive it. He couldn't take me in over the price, whereas my wife doesn't in the least know how to bargain. In fact, she doesn't understand how to talk to *anyone*," he went on as he remembered her failure to make conversation to the *stanovoi*,[1] who had been one of their guests of yesterday for the festival. "She is a *woman*—that is the long and the short of it. Moreover, what had she ever seen before I married her? Her father was only a well-to-do *muzhik*. A shabby little farm—that was all his property. But what have I not acquired in fifteen years? A store, two taverns, a mill, a granary, two rented holdings, and an iron-roofed villa and warehouse combined." He swelled with pride. "Rather different to her father, I think! In fact, who is the chief man in the district to-day? Why, Vassili Brekhunoff, of course!"

"And why so?" he continued presently. "Because I devote my whole attention to business and work hard—not like some people who lie abed and play the fool. *I* don't sleep whole nights away. No. Blizzard or no blizzard, out I go if

[1] The local magistrate.

necessary, and my business gets done. They think me a fool, and laugh at my money-making: but never mind, Vassili—go on working hard, even if it makes your head ache. If necessary, spend a night in the open like this rather than lose time. Never mind if you cannot sleep, either. To be able to think such thoughts is a pillow in itself," he concluded proudly.

"Some people seem to think that riches come to one by chance. Pooh! There is only one Mironoff in a million. No. Work hard, and God will give you the rest. If only He give you health and strength, that alone should be sufficient."

And the mere thought that he might one day become such a millionaire as Mironoff, who had risen from nothing, so fired Vassili with ecstasy that he yearned to have someone to speak to. Yet there was no one. Ah, but, once he could win to Goviatchkina, he would have a landowner to speak to—and to bamboozle as well!

"Good heavens, how it blows!" he continued as he listened to a squall of wind which was beating against the splashboard and bending it inwards as it lashed the bark planking with snow. "It is drifting the snow so much that perhaps we shall never get out in the morning."

Nothing could be seen in the white swirl of obscurity but Brownie's dark head and tail and the sack covering his back. At intervals the wind would toss the corners of the sack aloft, while in front and behind and on either side of the sledge whirled the same uniform mass of whiteness—now lightening a little, now suddenly becoming denser.

"I was a fool ever to have listened to Nikita," he thought. "We ought to have gone on again, and we should have landed somewhere. We might have reached Grishkino again, and been able to put up at Tarass's place after all. Yet here we have to stick all night! What is the good of that? God gives to those who help themselves, but not to loafers, sluggards and fools. I must try smoking again."

He sat up, got out a cigarette, and then rolled over on his stomach to shield the flame of the match from the wind with the flap of his coat. Yet the wind found an entry somehow, and blew out the matches, one by one. At length he contrived to keep one alight, and started smoking. He felt greatly pleased with his success, and although the wind got more of the smoke than he did, he managed to draw three whiffs, and was much cheered by them. He rolled himself back into a sitting posture, wrapped himself up again, and started once more to think over and consider matters; until suddenly, and without warning, he lost consciousness and went off into a doze.

All at once something seemed to jostle him, and he awoke. It might have been Brownie pulling away straw from beneath him, or it might have been the result of some internal disturbance, but at all events he awoke—and with his heart beating so fast and so furiously that the very sledge seemed to be shaking under him. He opened his eyes. The scene around him appeared exactly the same, except that it seemed lighter.

"It must be the dawn," he thought to himself. "It will soon be morning now."

Then all at once he remembered that the fact of its getting lighter could only mean that the moon was rising. He raised himself again, and looked at the cob. Brownie was standing with his hindquarters to the wind, and shaking all over. The snow-heaped sacking was turned up over his back on the windward side, and the crupper was slipping down over his flank, while his snow-powdered head and wind-tossed mane and forehead-tuft were more clearly visible than before. As for Nikita, he was still squatting in the same position as when he had first sat down, with his feet and the apron with which he had covered his head all piled with snow.

"A *muzhik* never freezes," thought Vassili as he bent over the back of the sledge and looked at him. "No, not for all his poor clothes. He can be trusted

for that. Yet the *muzhiks* are a stupid lot—a mere welter of ignorance."

For a moment he thought of taking the sacking off the cob's back and covering Nikita over with it, but it was too cold to get up and make the effort. Moreover, he was afraid of the cob starving if he did.

"What on earth did I take Nikita for?" he reflected. "I have *her* stupidity to thank for it all," (he was thinking of his wife). Then he rolled back into his former position by the splashboard. "My uncle spent a night in the snow like this," he went on, "yet he took no harm. Sebastian, too, once had to be dug out," he continued as another instance occurred to him. "Sebastian died, though, for he was frozen stiff as a carcase. If only we had stayed at Grishkino!"

Wrapping his coat more carefully about him, so that the protection of the fur should not be wasted at any point, but keep him warm from head to heels, he closed his eyes and tried to sleep again. Yet, for all his efforts, he could not succeed, but, on the contrary, continued absolutely alert and wakeful. Once more he began to make business calculations and to run over his outstanding debts. Once more, too, he began to appraise himself and to congratulate himself on his position in the world.

None the less, his every thought seemed to be broken in upon by a sort of haunting fear, as well as by a feeling of vexation that they had not stayed at Grishkino.

"To think of it!" he murmured. "Why, at this moment I might have been lying in a warm bed!"

More than once he turned himself over and resettled himself, in a vain endeavour to find an easier position and one more protected from the wind, but each new posture proved more uncomfortable than the last. At length he raised himself again, changed his position altogether, wrapped his legs up carefully, closed his eyes, and tried to lie perfectly still. Yet, either his

feet, squeezed into their stiff top-boots, had begun to ache, or the wind was catching him somewhere, but at all events he had not been lying long in this position before he found himself angrily remembering that at this very moment he might have been lying in a warm hut at Grishkino. Again he raised himself, again he wrapped his coat about him, and resettled himself. Once he thought he heard the far-off sound of cocks crowing, whereupon he turned down the collar of his coat in a tremor of joy and listened attentively; yet, for all his straining of his ears, he could hear nothing but the whistling of the wind through the shafts, the flapping of the handkerchief, and the lashing of the snow against the bark sides of the sledge.

As for Nikita, he remained squatting as he had done since the previous evening. Never once had he stirred, nor returned any answer to Vassili's shouts, although the latter had called to him more than once.

"*He* seems to have no difficulty in sleeping," thought Vassili with irritation as he leant over the back of the sledge and looked at the snow-covered Nikita.

In all, Vassili must have got up and lain down again at least twenty times. It seemed to him as if the night would never end.

"Surely it must be nearly morning now?" he thought once as he raised himself and glanced about him. "How would it be to look at my watch? But no; I might get frozen if I unhooked my coat. Yet, once I knew that it was drawing towards morning, things would seem better, and we would set about harnessing the cob."

In the depths of his soul, however, Vassili knew quite well that it could not be near morning yet. The truth was that his nervous panic was increasing to such an extent that he wished both to verify his supposition and to deceive himself. In the end he finished by carefully unhooking his fur coat, thrusting

his hand in, and groping about till he dug down to his waistcoat. A further series of efforts enabled him to draw out his silver watch, with its enamelled chasing of flowers. Then he tried to look at it, but nothing could be seen without a light. Once more he lay down upon his elbows and stomach (as he had done when getting ready to smoke), pulled out his matches, and set about striking one. By this time he had grown more expert at the business, and, feeling for the match with the largest head of sulphur, he contrived to light it at the first attempt. Then, thrusting the dial of the watch under the light, he looked at it, and could hardly believe his eyes! It was only ten minutes past one! The whole night lay before him!

"Oh, the long, long night!" he groaned, feeling as though the frost were striking down his back already. Then, hooking his coat up again and wrapping it about him, he sat back in the corner of the sledge, and prepared to wait with what patience he might.

Suddenly, above the monotonous wail of the wind he heard a new sound—a sound made by some living creature. It grew steadily louder, attained its maximum, and began as steadily to die away again. There could be no doubt what it was. It was a wolf. Nor was the beast so far off that the wind could drown the gradations of tone in its howl as it moved its jaws from side to side. Vassili put back his coat-collar from his ear and listened strainedly. Brownie was doing the same, his ears sharply pricked, and when the howl ceased he changed his legs and snorted uneasily. After this Vassili found it more than ever impossible to sleep—found it impossible to steady his nerves for a moment. The more he tried to think of his business affairs and accounts, his reputation, dignity and wealth, the more did terror begin to master him; while, above all other thoughts, and yet mixed up with them, floated the persistent question—"Why did we not stop the night at Grishkino?"

"God be with that landowner and his forest," he

thought to himself, "yet I wish I had never come across either of them. To have to spend the night here! They say that men who have been drinking always freeze readily, and *I* have been drinking to-night."

Listening thus to his own suggestions, he could feel himself beginning to tremble, though he hardly knew why—whether from cold, that is to say, or from fear. He tried to cover himself up and lie down as before, but found this impossible. He could not remain still, even for a second, but felt as if he must be up and doing something to stifle the terror which was rising in him, and against which he felt himself powerless. He got out his matches and cigarettes once more, but of the former there remained but three, and they of the sorriest kind. Indeed, all of them fizzled out without lighting when struck.

"The devil take you, you cursed bit of rubbish! Go and be hanged to you!" he burst out (though hardly knowing what it was he was swearing at) as he hurled the battered cigarette away. The match-box was about to follow it, when he stayed his hand, and thrust the box into his pocket. Such a fit of restlessness now seized upon him that he could stay no longer where he was. Leaping from the sledge, and standing with his back to the wind, he began lowering and tightening up his belt again.

"Why should we lie here, waiting for death to come?" he exclaimed as a new idea suddenly struck him. "Why not mount the cob and ride away? With only a man on his back he would never stick fast." Then he thought of Nikita "Oh, but it would be nothing to him to die," he went on. "What can his life matter to him? He has nothing much to lose with it, whereas I have much to gain with mine."

So he untied the cob, threw the halter over its neck, and tried to mount, but his fur coat and boots weighed him down, and he slipped back every time. Then he climbed onto the sledge and tried to mount from

there, but the sledge kept rocking under his weight, and he failed again. At length, and for the third time, he drew the cob close to the sledge, balanced himself cautiously on the rim, and succeeded so far as to find himself stretched face downwards athwart the animal's back. Lying thus, he wriggled himself forward once or twice until he had got his leg over and seated himself, his toes resting in the trace-loops of the saddle-piece. But the jolting of the sledge as it shook under Vassili's weight had awakened Nikita, who now raised himself and seemed to Vassili to be saying something.

"Look here, you fool," shouted Vassili. "It's all through you that we have got into this plight—got into it for nothing, too," and, tucking the flapping skirts of his greatcoat beneath his knees, he turned the cob round, and rode away from the sledge in the direction where he thought the forest and the forest-keeper's lodge must be.

VII

Up to this moment Nikita had never once stirred since he first squatted down behind the sledge and covered himself over with the apron. Like all people who live in close contact with nature and are familiar with hardship, he was patient, and could sit waiting for hours, or even for days, without growing restless or losing his temper. He had heard his master call out to him twice, yet had returned no answer, for the sole reason that he did not feel inclined to stir or to go to the trouble of raising his voice. Although he was warm enough at the time he had sat down, both with the tea which he had drunk and with the exertion of plunging through snowdrifts, he knew that that would not last long, and that he would be powerless to restore the warmth by exercising himself, since he felt as utterly worn out as a horse feels when he stops and can go no further, despite the severest whipping,

and his master sees that no further work can be got out of him until he has been rested and fed. Moreover, one of his feet had got frost-bitten through its ragged boot, so that the big toe had lost all sensation and his whole body was becoming steadily colder and colder. Consequently, in time, the thought began to enter his head that he might have to die that night. Yet the thought was neither particularly unwelcome nor particularly awe-inspiring. It was not particularly unwelcome, for the reason that his life had not been exactly an uninterrupted holiday, but, on the contrary, a life of ceaseless servitude, of which he was beginning to grow weary. Nor did the thought seem to him particularly awe-inspiring, for the reason that, over and above the masters whom he had served on earth—masters such as Vassili Andreitch—he had always felt himself dependent upon the Great Master who had sent him into this life, and knew that, in dying, he would still remain that Master's servant, and that that Master would be good to him.

"Should I be sorry to leave the life in which I am settled and which I am accustomed to?" he thought. "Well, even if I have to go, I cannot help myself, and it were best to prepare for the new one."

"My sins?" he went on presently as he remembered his drunken orgies, the money squandered on drink, his insults to his wife, his frequent oaths, his neglect of church-going, his non-observance of fast-days, and all the many things for which the priest had reproved him at confession time. "Well, of course they were sins—I have never denied that; but it was God who made me what I am. Yet, what terrible sins they have been! What will become of me for such sins?"

Then, from thinking of what might be in store for him that night he passed, without recurring to that thought, to memories which came into his head at random. He thought of Martha's arrival, of the workmen's carouse, of his refusal to share their liquor, of the present expedition, of Tarass's hut, of the talk

about family separations, of his little lad, of Brownie (now, doubtless, growing warm under his sacking), and of the master who was making the sledge creak above him as he tossed and turned.

"Well, I had plenty of tea to drink there and was tired," he thought "*I* had no wish to start out again. *I* had no wish to leave such good living to come and die in this hole. Yet *he* wished otherwise."

Then all these memories swam together and jumbled themselves up in his head, and he went off into a doze.

From this doze he was awakened by Vassili shaking the sledge as he mounted the cob—shaking it so violently that it slewed right round and struck Nikita in the back with one of its runners, forcing him, willy-nilly, to shift his position. Stretching out his legs with some difficulty and sweeping the snow off them, he raised himself a little, and at once felt a pang shoot through his body. Understanding at the first glance what Vassili intended to do, he begged him to leave the sacking behind, since the cob no longer needed it and it would make an additional covering for himself. He shouted to Vassili to that effect, but the latter disappeared in the snow-dust without heeding him. Left alone, Nikita considered what he had better do. He felt that he had not sufficient strength also to go off in search of a human habitation, while it was impossible for him to resume his old seat, since the snow had filled up the hole already. Even if he got into the sledge, things would not mend, for he had no extra covering, and his *khalat* and fur jacket no longer kept him warm. He could not have felt colder if he had been clad only in a shirt.

The situation was becoming one of positive agony.

"Little Father—our Little Father in Heaven!" he cried aloud; and the knowledge that he was not alone, but that there was One who could hear him and would never abandon him, brought him comfort. He drew a deep sigh and, with the apron still covering

his head, crept into the sledge and lay down where his master had been. Even there, however, he could not grow warm. At first he kept shivering all over. Then the shivering fit passed away, and he began to lose consciousness. He might have been dead or asleep, for all he could tell, yet felt prepared for either eventuality.

VIII

Meanwhile Vassili was using his heels and the spare end of the halter to urge the cob in the direction where, for some reason or another, he supposed the forest and the forest-keeper to be. The snow blinded his eyes and the wind seemed as if it were struggling to stop him, but, bending forward at times to double the skirts of his coat and tuck them between his knees and the icy saddle-piece which made his seat such an uncomfortable one, he pressed the cob onwards unceasingly. The animal moved with difficulty, yet proceeded whither it was directed in its usual docile manner.

For what seemed to him some five minutes Vassili rode straight ahead, seeing nothing in front of him but the cob's head and ears and a sea of whiteness, and hearing nothing but the whistling of the wind over the cob's ears and round the collar of his fur coat. Suddenly, however, something black showed up before him. His heart began to beat hopefully, and he rode towards the object, imagining that he already discerned in its outlines the walls of the houses forming a village. The object did not keep still, however, but was forever waving from side to side. In fact, it turned out to be, not a village, but a tall piece of wormwood, which, growing out of a boundary ridge and projecting above the snow, bent violently over to one side each time that the wind struck it and went whistling through its stems. Somehow the sight of this wormwood thus tortured by the cruel wind caused Vassili to shudder, and he re-started the cob

in haste, without noticing that, in turning aside to the wormwood, he had deviated from his former direction, and was now riding at a tangent to it. None the less, he imagined himself still to be bearing in the fancied direction of the forest-keeper's hut, and, although the cob kept trying to swerve to the right, he as often straightened it again to the left.

For the second time a dark object loomed up before him, filling his heart with joy, since he felt certain this time that here was a village at last: yet it proved to be only another boundary ridge topped with wormwood. As in the case of the first one, the sound of the wind wailing through the dried stems seemed to fill Vassili with fear. This piece of wormwood was exactly similar to the other piece in all respects save one—namely, that beside this second piece ran the track of a horse's hoofs, slightly powdered over with snow. Vassili pulled up, leaned forward, and looked at the track carefully. It was the track of a small-sized hoof, and the covering of snow upon it was, as yet, a mere sprinkling. In short, it was the track of his own cob! He had described a complete circle, and that not a large one.

"So this is how I am to perish!" he thought. Then, lest he should yield to his terror, he started forward again, and urged on the cob even more strenuously than before. At every moment, as he strained his eyes into the swirl of whiteness before him, he seemed to see dark points stand out for a second and then vanish as soon as he looked at them. Once he thought he heard what might have been either the barking of a dog or the howl of a wolf, but the sound was so faint and uncertain that he could not be sure whether he had really heard anything or whether it had been only his fancy. He stopped and listened attentively.

Suddenly a weird, startling cry sounded in his very ears, and everything beneath him seemed to heave and tremble. He clutched the cob's mane, yet found that that too was quivering, while the cry grew ever

more and more piercing. For some seconds Vassili could not frame a thought or understand in the least what was happening. Yet all that had happened was that the cob had been seized with the idea either of inspiriting himself or of calling for help, and had neighed loudly in his raucous, guttural tones.

"How the beast frightened me, be hanged to it!" gasped Vassili to himself. Yet, although he understood now the cause of his terror, he could not shake himself free from it.

"I must consider things a moment and steady myself," he thought. Yet it was all to no purpose, for he could not master himself—could not keep from urging the cob on; taking no heed the while that he was now riding before the wind instead of against it. His body was chilled and aching all over, but especially in the lower part, next the saddle-piece, where his coat was unhooked, whilst his hands and feet were shaking violently and his breath came in gasps. He felt sure now that he was to perish in the midst of this fearful waste of snow, and that nothing could save him.

Suddenly the cob gave a groan as it stuck fast in a snowdrift, and, struggling violently, began to sink sideways onto its flank. Vassili leapt off, displacing as he did so the trace-loops in which his feet had been resting, and so also the saddle-piece on which he had been seated. Yet he had no sooner dismounted than the cob righted himself, lurched forward, took a couple of plunges, and disappeared with a loud neigh, trailing behind him the sacking and harness, and leaving Vassili stranded in the snowdrift. Vassili made a rush to catch him, but the snow was so deep, and his fur coat so heavy, that he sank knee-deep at every step, and had taken no more than twenty strides when his breath failed him, and he had to stop.

"The timber, the wethers for the butcher, the rent-hold land, the store, the taverns, the iron-roofed villa and warehouse, my little heir—am I to leave them all?" he thought. "Is it to end like this? No, no, it cannot be!"

For some reason or another there came into his mind at that moment a picture of the wormwood waving in the wind, and of himself twice riding up to it. Such terror seized upon him that he could hardly believe in the reality of what was happening. "I must be dreaming it all," he thought, and tried, as it were, to awake from his dream: yet there was no awakening for him. It was real snow that was lashing his face, heaping his form over, and chilling his right hand, which had lost its mitten. It was a real desert, too, in which he was now left lonely—as lonely as the wormwood—and in which he must await an imminent, a swift, and an unthinkable death.

"O Queen of Heaven! O Holy Father Saint Nicholas who teachest us abstinence!" he began, with a dim recollection of the thanksgiving service of yesterday, of the *ikon* with its blackened face and golden vestment, and of the candles for that *ikon* which he had sold, and which, returned to him straightway, he had replaced in his locker after lighting them for a brief moment. Again and again he besought the wonder-working Saint Nicholas to save him from his fate, promising in return a thanksgiving and many candles. Yet all the time he knew beyond the possibility of doubt that, although that blackened face and golden vestment, as well as the candles, the priest, and the thanksgivings, were all of them very important and necessary there in the church, they could do nothing for him here, and that between those candles and thanksgivings on the one hand, and his present forlorn plight on the other, there could be no real connection whatever.

"Still, I must not despair," he thought. "I have only to follow the cob's track before it gets snowed over, and it will bring me out somewhere. Only, I must not hurry too much, or I might plunge into another snowdrift and be worse off than ever."

Nevertheless, for all his determination to go quietly, he could not help quickening his pace, breaking into a run, tumbling down continually, picking himself

up again, and once more falling. Moreover, the cob's track was almost invisible where the snow was not deep.

"I am done for!" he said at last. "I am not following the cob's track at all, but only losing myself."

Just as he said this, however, he happened to glance ahead, and caught sight of something dark there. It was Brownie! And not Brownie alone, but also the shafts and the handkerchief! The cob was standing beside the sledge, with the harness and sacking still dangling down his flank—but standing in a different position to before, since he was just under the shafts, and had his head (which he kept shaking at intervals) drawn close to the ground by the halter, which had caught round his pastern. It seemed that Vassili had stuck fast in the same ravine as that into which Nikita and he had previously blundered—that, as a matter of fact, the cob had been carrying him straight back to the sledge, and that, at the moment when he jumped off, he had only been fifty paces from it!

IX

STAGGERING up to the sledge, Vassili grasped hold of it and stood for a long time without moving as he endeavoured to steady himself and regain his breath. There was nothing to be seen of Nikita in his old position, but in the sledge there lay something heaped with snow, which Vassili guessed to be his servant. Vassili's terrors had now vanished—or, if any were left, it was merely lest he should have a return of the horrible panic which he had experienced on the cob's back, and, still more, when he found himself left in the snowdrift. At all costs he must not give way to that panic again; and if he would avoid that, he must be up and doing something—must be occupying his thoughts with something. First of all he planted himself with his back to the wind, and unfastened his fur

coat to cool himself. Then, when he had regained his breath a little, he shook the snow off his boots and left-hand mitten (the other one was hopelessly lost, and probably lying somewhere a couple of inches below the snow), and refastened his belt tightly—much as he was accustomed to do when he was about to step out of his store to buy cartloads of grain which the *muzhiks* had brought. This done, he set about exerting himself. The first thing which it occurred to him to do was to disentangle the cob's leg, and, the halter thus freed, he tied Brownie up to the rim of the splashboard where he had been tied before. Next, he had just gone behind the cob to straighten the crupper, sacking and saddle-piece on his back, when he saw something stir in the sledge, and then the head of Nikita emerge from beneath the snow which covered it. The frozen man raised himself a little—though evidently with a great effort—and made a strange gesture with his hand in front of his face, as though he were brushing away a fly. As he did this he seemed to Vassili to be saying something—probably Vassili's name—so the latter left the sacking unstraightened and stepped up to the sledge.

"How is it with you now?" he asked, "and what are you trying to say?"

"Only that I—I am dying," answered Nikita with difficulty and in gasps. "Give my wages to the little lad or to the wife—it does not matter which."

"Are you frozen, then?" said Vassili.

"Yes—and dying; I know it quite well," replied Nikita in a choking voice, and still fluttering his hand before his face as though to brush away a fly. "Pardon me, for Christ's sake."

For about half a minute Vassili stood without moving and in silence. Then all at once, and with the same air of decision as marked him when he had struck hands over a good bargain, he took a step backwards, tucked up the sleeves of his coat, and began with both hands to rake the snow off Nikita and out of the sledge. This done, he unhooked his

belt, opened his fur coat, pushed Nikita hastily into a straight posture, and lay down upon him in such a way that the latter should be covered, not only with the coat, but with Vassili's own warm, overheated body. With one skirt of the coat tucked between Nikita's form and the side of the sledge, and the tail of it grasped between his ankles, Vassili remained lying prone, with his head resting upon the splashboard and his ears deaf either to the movements of the cob or to the howling of the wind, but intent only on listening to Nikita's breathing. For a long time Nikita lay without moving. Then he gave a deep sigh, and stirred faintly.

"There you are, you see, and yet you talk of dying!" began Vassili. "Just you lie still and grow warm, and we—"

To his great surprise Vassili found that he could say no more, for tears were welling from his eyes and his lower jaw was working. He broke off short, and swallowed a lump in his throat.

"How absurdly weak and nervous I have made myself," he thought. Yet not only did he find this weakness far from unpleasant, but it actually gave him a sensation of joy such as he had never yet experienced.

"Yes, we shall manage it all right like this," he said to himself, conscious of a rapturous feeling of emotion. After this he lay for a long time in silence, merely wiping his eyes against the fur of the coat, and tucking back its right-hand skirt as the wind blew it up at intervals; but at length he felt as though he must communicate his joy to a fellow-creature.

"Nikita," he said.

"That is better. I am getting warm now," came from underneath him.

"Nikita, my old friend, I thought we were done for. You would have been frozen, and I—"

Once more Vassili's cheeks started quivering and his eyes filled with tears, so that he could say no more.

"No, it is no good," he said to himself. "Yet I know what I know," and he remained silent. Still he lay there. Warmth seemed to be passing into his body from Nikita below and from the fur coat above. Only the hands with which he held the skirts of the coat against Nikita's sides, and his feet, from between which the wind kept blowing the skirts away, were beginning to feel frozen. His mittenless right hand in particular felt numbed. Yet he never thought of his hands or feet—only of how he could best warm the peasant who was lying beneath him.

More than once he glanced at the cob and saw that its back was uncovered, since the sacking had now slipped off altogether and was lying on the snow. He felt as if he ought to go and cover the animal over again yet could not make up his mind to leave Nikita, even for a moment, and thus break the spell of that rapturous joy which now possessed him. As for his terrors, they had long since fled away.

"By heavens, I am not going to be beaten!" he said to himself with reference to his efforts to warm Nikita—speaking, indeed, in just the same boastful tone in which he had been accustomed to speak of his sales or purchases.

He lay for an hour—for two—for three, but took no heed of the passing of time. At first there danced before his vision dim pictures of the storm, of the shafts, and of the cob under its high *douga*. Then these pictures became exchanged for jumbled memories of the festival, of his wife, of the *stanovoi*, and of the candle-locker—but beneath the picture of the candle-locker lay Nikita. Then again he saw the *muzhiks* trading with him, and the white, iron-roofed walls of his house—but beneath the picture of those walls again lay Nikita. Then everything became confused. One thing ran into another, until at last these various scattered impressions came together as the colours of a rainbow merge into a beam of white light, and he fell asleep. For long he slept without dreaming, but, just before the dawn came,

there came also some sleep-visions. He seemed to be standing by the candle-locker, while old mother Tikhonova was asking him for a five-copeck [1] candle for the festival. He tried to take the candle out and give it to her, but his hands remained glued in his pockets. Then he tried to walk round the locker, but his legs refused to move, and his new, clean shoes stuck fast to the stone floor, so that he could not even raise his feet to take the shoes off.

Then suddenly the locker was not a locker at all, but a bed, and on that bed Vassili could see himself lying, face downwards—lying on his own bed at home. He was lying on the bed, and could not rise, although it was necessary for him to do so, seeing that Ivan Matveitch, the *stanovoi*, was coming to see him presently, and he must go with Ivan either to buy some timber or to put the crupper straight on the cob's back—he could not be sure which. He kept asking his wife, "Has he not come yet, Mikolovna?" and she kept answering him, "No, not yet." Then he could hear someone driving up to the steps outside. Surely it must be he? But no—the vehicle had driven past. "Is he not come yet, Mikolovna?" he asked his wife once more, and once more she replied, "No, not yet." Thus he lay and lay upon the bed, unable to rise, and ever waiting—waiting: and the waiting was at once painful and joyous. Suddenly the joy of it was filled to the full! He for whose coming he had been waiting, was now at hand and it was not Ivan Matveitch nor anyone else. Yet still it was the Man for whom he had been waiting. He entered—did that Man—and called him: and this Man who had called him cried out to him again and bade him go and lie down upon Nikita. And Vassili was glad that this Someone had come. "Yes, I will go!" he cried in his joy, and with that cry Vassili awoke.

Yes, he awoke—but awoke a very different man to what he had been when he fell asleep. He tried to rise, and could not. He tried to move his hand, and

[1] = 1¼d.

could not. He tried to move his leg, and could not. Then he tried to turn his head, but that also he could not do. This surprised him, yet in no way troubled him. Then he remembered that Nikita was lying beneath him, and that Nikita was growing warm and was coming back to life. It seemed to him that he was Nikita, and Nikita he, and that his life was no longer within himself, but within Nikita. He strained his ears till he caught the sound of breathing—yes, the faint, deep breathing of Nikita. "Nikita is alive!" he cried to himself in triumph, "and therefore so also am I!"

Then he began to think about his money, his store, his house, his sales and purchases, and Mironoff's millions. He could not understand how that man whom men called Vassili Brekhunoff could bear to interest himself in such things as he did. "That man can never have known what is the greatest thing of all," he thought of this Vassili Brekhunoff. "He can never have known what I know. Yes, I know it for certain now. At last—I KNOW!"

Once again he heard the Man calling him who had called to him before, and his whole being seemed to respond in joy and loving-kindness as he replied: "I am coming, I am coming!" For he felt that he was free at last, and that nothing could hold him further.

And, indeed, nothing further than that did Vassili Andreitch see or hear or feel in this world.

Around him the tempest still kept on. The same swirls of snow kept circling in eddies and covering the coats of the dead Vassili Andreitch and the trembling Brownie, the sledge (now almost invisible) and, stretched out upon its floor, the now reviving Nikita as he lay prone beneath the body of his dead master.

X

JUST before morning Nikita awoke. It was the frost making its way down his back which aroused him.

He had just been dreaming that he was driving from the mill with a load of his master's flour, and that, instead of taking the bridge over the stream, he went by the ford, and stuck fast. He could see himself getting under the load and trying to lift it as he straightened his back. Yet, strange to say, the load would not move, but clung always to his back, so that he could neither move the cart nor withdraw himself from beneath it. It seemed to be breaking his very loins. And how cold it felt! At all costs he must get away from beneath it. "Hold on," he found himself saying to the someone who was causing the load to break his back. "Take off some of the sacks." Yet the load kept growing colder and colder, and pressing more and more heavily upon him. Then suddenly something gave a loud bang, and he became fully awake and remembered all that had happened. That chilly load—it was his dead frozen master. That loud bang—it had been caused by Brownie striking his hoofs against the sledge.

"Andreitch, Andreitch!" he cried cautiously to his master (though he half guessed the truth already) as he raised his back stiffly. But Andreitch returned no answer, while his body and legs were cold and stiff and heavy as weights.

"There is no doubt that he is dead," thought Nikita. He turned his head round, pushed the snow away from in front of his face, and opened his eyes. It was quite light now. The wind was still humming through the shafts and the snow streaming down—but with this difference, that the snow was no longer dashing itself against the sides of the sledge, but piling itself up in silence over sledge and cob—from the latter of which not even the sound of breathing was now to be heard.

"Brownie too must be frozen," thought Nikita. And, indeed, those two loud hoof-strokes upon the sledge which had awakened him had been the last efforts of the now dead and frozen animal to keep upon his legs

'O God, Little Father of ours, surely thou wilt call me also?" said Nikita. "If so, Thy will be done. It would be hard that two of us should be taken and the other left. Let death come when it will," and he drew his hand in again, closed his eyes and fell asleep, firmly convinced that this time he was really and truly dead.

It was about the time of the midday meal next day when some *muzhiks* dug out Vassili and Nikita—seventy yards only from the road, and half a verst from the village.

The snow had drifted completely over the sledge, but the shafts, with the handkerchief on them, were still visible. Brownie, belly-deep in the snow, stood a white frozen mass, his dead muzzle pressed tightly inwards against his rigid neck, his nostrils fringed with icicles, and his eyes coated over and glazed with ice as with frozen tears. Moreover, he had so wasted away in that one night that there remained of him but skin and bones. As for Vassili, he too was as stiff as a frozen carcase, and when his legs were pulled aside the corpse rolled off Nikita in a solid lump. His prominent, hawk-like eyes were frozen hard, and his mouth (open a little under his cropped moustache) filled with snow. Nikita only was alive, though frost-bitten all over. Yet, when brought to himself, he could not be persuaded that he was not dead, and that all that was now happening to him was not taking place in the next world instead of in this. Indeed, his first feeling when he heard the *muzhiks* shouting above him as they dug out the sledge and then rolled the stiffened Vassili off him was one of surprise that *muzhiks* shouted in the next world even as they had shouted in this, and had similar bodies! When at length he understood that he was really here—here in this present world—he felt vexed rather than pleased, especially as he could feel that the fingers of both his hands were frostbitten.

For about two months he lay in hospital. Three of his fingers had to be amputated, but the others

healed, so that he was able to go to work again and to live twenty years longer—first as a labourer, and then, in his old age, as a watchman. Indeed, he died only this year—at home and under the *ikons*, with a lighted wax candle in his hands, just as he had always wished. Before his death he took leave of his old wife, and pardoned her for the cooper. He took leave also of his son and grandchildren, and died thoroughly happy to think that his death left his son and daughter-in-law freed from the burden of having a supernumerary mouth to feed, and that this time he himself would really pass from a life which had grown wearisome to him to that other life which had been growing more and more familiar and alluring to him each year and hour. Is he better or worse off now where he has awakened after his death—the death which really came that time? Is he disillusioned, or has he really found what he expected? Soon we shall all know.

HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN REQUIRE?

I

An elder sister came from the town to visit a younger one. The elder one was married to a tradesman, and the younger to a peasant. As the two drank tea and talked the elder sister began to boast and make much of her life in town—how she lived and went about in ease and comfort, dressed her children well, had nice things to eat and drink, and went skating, walking, and to the theatre.

The younger sister was vexed at this, and retorted by running down the life of a tradesman's wife and exalting her own country one.

"For my part, I should not care to exchange my life for yours," she said. "I grant you ours is an uneventful existence and that we know no excitement; yet you, on the other hand, with all your fine living, must either do a very large trade indeed or be ruined. You know the proverb: 'Loss is Gain's elder brother.' Well, you may be rich to-day, but to-morrow you may find yourself in the street. We have a better way than that, here in the country. The peasant's stomach may be thin, but it is long. That is to say, he may never be rich, yet he will always have enough."

The elder sister took her up quickly.

"'Enough' indeed?" she retorted. "'Enough'—with nothing but your wretched pigs and calves? 'Enough,' with no fine dresses or company? Why, however hard your man may work, you have to live in mud, and will die there—yes, and your children after you."

"Oh, no," replied the younger. "'Tis like this with us. Though we may live hardly, the land is at least our own, and we have no need to bow and scrape to anyone. But you in town—you live in an atmo-

sphere of scandal. To-day all may be well with you, but to-morrow the evil eye may look upon you, and your husband find himself tempted away by cards or wine or some light-of-love, and you and yours find yourselves ruined. Is it not so?"

Pakhom, the younger sister's husband, had been listening near the stove.

"That is true," he said. "I have been turning over our mother earth since my childhood, so have had no time to get any foolishness into my head. Yet I have one grievance—too little land. Only give me land, and I fear no man—no, not even the Devil himself."

The two women finished their tea, chattered a little longer about dress, washed up the crockery, and went to bed.

All this time the Devil had been sitting behind the stove, and had heard everything. He was delighted when the peasant's wife led her husband on to brag—led him on to boast that, once given land, not even the Devil himself should take it from him.

"Splendid!" thought the Devil. "I will try a fall with you. I will give you much land—and then take it away again."

II

NEAR these peasants there lived a lady landowner, with a small property of 120 *dessiatins*.[1] Formally she had got on well with the peasants and in no way abused her rights; but now she took as overseer a retired soldier, who began to persecute the peasants with fines. No matter how careful Pakhom might be, one of his horses would get into the lady's oats, or a cow stray into her garden, or the calves break into her meadows: and for all these things there would be fines levied.

Pakhom paid up, and then beat and abused his household. Much trouble did he get into with the

[1] The dessiatin = 2¾ acres.

overseer for the doings of the summer, so that he felt devoutly thankful to have got his cattle standing in the straw-yard again. He regretted the cost of their keep there, yet it cost him less anxiety in other ways.

That winter a rumour went abroad that the *Barina*[1] was going to sell her land, and that the overseer was arranging to buy both it and the highway rights attached. This rumour reached the peasants, and they were dismayed.

"If," they thought, "the overseer gets the land he will worry us with fines even worse than he did under the *Barina*. We must get hold of the property somehow, as we all live round it in a circle."

So a deputation from the *Mir*[2] went to see the *Barina*, and besought her not to sell the land to the overseer, but to give them the refusal of it, and they would outbid their rival. To this the *Barina* agreed, and the peasants set about arranging for the *Mir* to purchase the whole of her estate. They held a meeting about it, and yet another one, but the matter did not go through. The fact was that the Unclean One always defeated their object by making them unable to agree. Then the peasants decided to try and buy the land in separate lots, each man as much as he could; and to this also the *Barina* said she was agreeable. Pakhom heard one day that a neighbour had bought twenty *dessiatins*, and that the *Barina* had agreed to let half the purchase money stand over for a year. Pakhom grew envious. "If," he thought, "the others buy up all the land, I shall feel left out in the cold." So he took counsel of his wife. "Everybody is buying some," he said, "so we too had better get hold of ten *dessiatins*. We can't make a living as things are now, for the overseer takes it all out of us in fines." So they took thought how to effect he purchase.

They had 100 roubles laid by; so that by selling a foal and half their bees, in addition to putting out their son to service, they managed to raise half the money.

[1] Great lady. [2] Village commune.

Pakhom collected it all together, selected fifteen *dessiatins* and a small piece of timber land, and went to the *Barina* to arrange things. The bargain struck, they shook hands upon it, and Pakhom paid a deposit. Then he went to town, completed the conveyance (half the purchase money to be paid now, and half within two years' time)—and lo! Pakhom was a landowner! He also borrowed a small sum of his brother-in-law, wherewith to purchase seed. This he duly sowed in his newly-acquired property, and a fine crop came up; so that within a year he had repaid both the *Barina* and his brother-in-law. He was now an absolute proprietor. It was his own land that he sowed, his own hay that he reaped, his own firewood that he cut, and his own cattle that he grazed. Whenever he rode out to his inalienable estate, either to plough or to inspect the crops and meadows, he felt overjoyed. The very grass seemed to him different to other grass, the flowers to bloom differently. Once, when he had ridden over this land, it was just—land; but now, although still land, it was land with a difference.

III

Thus did Pakhom live for a time, and was happy. Indeed, all would have been well if only the other peasants had left Pakhom's corn and pasture alone. In vain did he make repeated remonstrances. Shepherds would turn their flocks out into his meadows, and horses would somehow get into the corn at night. Again and again Pakhom drove them out and overlooked the matter, but at last he lost his temper and laid a complaint before the district court. He knew that the peasants only did it from lack of land, not maliciously; yet it could not be allowed, since they were eating the place up. He must teach them a lesson.

So he taught first one of them a lesson in court,

and then another; had one fined, and then a second. This aroused feeling against him, and his neighbours now began, of set purpose, to steal his crops. One man got into the plantation at night, and stripped the bark off no less than ten linden-trees. When Pakhom next rode that way and saw what had been done he turned pale. He drew nearer, and perceived that bark had been stripped off and thrown about, and trunks uprooted. One tree only had the miscreant left, after lopping all its branches, but the rest he had cleared entirely in his evil progress. Pakhom was furious. "Ah!" he thought, "if only I knew who had done this, I would soon get my own back on him!" He wondered and wondered who it could be. If anyone in particular, it must be Semka. So he went to see Semka, but got nothing out of him except bad language: yet he felt more certain than ever now that it *was* Semka who had done it. He laid a complaint against him, and they were both of them summoned to attend the court. The magistrates sat and sat, and then dismissed the case for want of evidence. This enraged Pakhom still more. He abused both the *starshina*[1] and the magistrates. "You magistrates," he said, "are in league with thieves. If you were honest men you would never have acquitted Semka." Yes, there was no doubt that Pahkom was ill pleased both with the magistrates and with his neighbours. He began to live more and more apart on his land, and to have less and less to do with the *Mir*.

At this time there arose a rumour that some of the peasantry thereabouts were thinking of emigrating. This made Pakhom think to himself: "But there is no reason why I should leave *my* land. If some of the others go, why, it will make all the more room for me. I can buy up their land, and so hedge myself in all round. I should live much more comfortably then. At present I am too cramped."

It happened soon afterwards that Pakhom was

[1] Village policeman and headman.

sitting at home one day, when a travelling peasant dropped in. Pakhom gave him a night's lodging and a meal, and then questioned him, in the course of conversation, as to whence in the name of God he had come. To this the peasant replied that he had come from lower down the river—from a spot beyond the Volga, where he had been in service. Then he went on to relate how a settlement was being formed there, every settler being enrolled in the *Mir* and allotted ten *dessiatins* of land. It was *such* land, too, he said, and grew *such* rye! Why, the straw of the rye was tall enough to hide a horse, and thick enough together to make a sheaf per five handfuls! One peasant, he went on, who had arrived there a poor man and had had nothing but his two hands to work with now grew his fifty *dessiatins* of wheat. Indeed, during the past year that man had made 5000 roubles by his wheat alone!

Pakhom's soul was fired by this, and he thought to himself: "Why should I stay here, poor and cramped up, when I might be making such a fine living as that? I will sell out here—both land and homestead —and go build myself a new house and farm there with the money. Here, in this cramped-up spot, life is one long worry. At any rate, I might take a trip there and make inquiries."

So when the summer came he got himself ready and set out. He took a steamer down the Volga to Samara, and thence tramped 400 versts till he came to the place. It was all as had been described. The peasants lived splendidly, with ten *dessiatins* of free land to each soul, and he was assured of a welcome by the *Mir*. Moreover, he was told that anyone who came there with money could buy additional land—as much as ever he wanted—right out and in perpetuity. For three roubles a *dessiatin* a man could have the very finest land possible, and to any extent.

All this Pakhom learnt, and then returned home in the autumn. He began straightway to sell out, and succeeded in disposing both of land, buildings,

and stock at a profit. Then he took his name off the *Mir's* books, waited for the spring, and departed to the new place with his family.

IV

They duly arrived at their destination, and Pakhom was forthwith enrolled in the *Mir* of the great settlement (after moistening the elders' throats, of course, and executing the necessary documents). Then they took him and assigned him fifty *dessiatins* of land—ten for each soul of his family—in different parts of the estate, in addition to common pasturage. Pakhom built himself a homestead and stocked it, his allotted land alone being twice what he had formerly possessed in the old place. It was corn-bearing land, too. Altogether life was ten times better here than where he had come from, for he had at his disposal both arable and pasture land—sufficient of the latter always to keep as many cattle as he cared to have.

At first, while building and stocking, he thought everything splendid. Later, when he had settled down a bit, he began to feel cramped again. He wanted to grow white Turkish wheat as several others did, but there was hardly any wheat-bearing land among his five allotments. Wheat needed to be grown on grass, new, or fallow land, and such land had to be sown one year and left fallow for two, in order that the grass might grow again. True, he had as much soft land as he wanted, but it would only bear rye. Wheat required hard land, and hard land found many applicants, and there was not enough for all. Moreover, such land gave rise to disputes. The richer peasants sowed their own, but the poorer had to mortgage theirs to merchants. The first year, Pakhom sowed his allotments with wheat, and got splendid crops. Then he wanted to sow them with wheat again, but they were not large enough to admit both of sowing new land and of leaving last year's land to lie

fallow. He must get hold of some more. So he went to a merchant, and took a year's lease of some wheat land. He sowed as much of it as he could, and reaped a magnificent crop. Unfortunately, however, the land was a long way from the settlement—in fact, the crop had to be carted fifteen versts; so, as Pakhom had seen merchant farmers living in fine homesteads and growing rich in the district where the land lay, he thought to himself: "How would it be if I took a longer lease of it and built a homestead there the same as they have done? Then I should be right on the land." So he set about arranging to do so.

Thus did Pakhom live for five years, continually taking up land and sowing it with wheat. All the years were good ones, the wheat thrived, and the money came in. Yet just to live and live was rather tedious, and Pakhom began to tire of leasing land every year in a strange district and removing his stock there. Wherever there was a particularly good plot of land there would be a rush made for it by the other peasants, and it would be divided up before he was ready to lease and sow it as a whole. Once he went shares with a merchant in leasing a plot of pasturage of some peasants, and ploughed it up. Then the peasants lost it in a law suit, and his labour went for nothing. If only it had been his own land, absolutely, he need have given in to no one and been put to no trouble.

So he began to cast about where he could buy an estate outright. In this endeavour he fell in with a certain peasant who had ruined himself and was ready to let him have his property of 500 *dessiatins* cheap. Pakhom entered into negotiations with him, and, after much discussion, closed at 1000 roubles—half down, and half to stand over. One day after they had thus clinched the matter, a merchant drove up to Pakhom's homestead to bate his horses. They drank a tea-pot empty and talked. The merchant said he had come a long, long way—from the country of the Bashkirs, in fact, where (so he said) he had just

purchased 5000 *dessiatins* for only 1000 roubles! Pakhom went on to question him further, and the merchant to answer. "All I did," said the latter, "was to make the elders there a few presents (*khalats*,[1] carpets, and a chest of tea), to distribute about a hundred roubles, and to stand *vodka* to anyone who felt inclined for it. In the result I got the land for twenty copecks a *dessiatin*," and he showed Pakhom the deed. "The property," he concluded, "fronts upon a river, and is all of it open, grass, steppe land." Pakhom questioned him still further.

"You would not," went on the merchant, "find such land as that in a year. The same with all the Bashkir land. Moreover, the people there are as simple as sheep. You can get things out of them absolutely for nothing."

"Well," thought Pakhom, "what is the good of my giving 1000 roubles for only 500 *dessiatins*, and still leaving a debt round my neck, when there I might become a proprietor indeed for the same money?"

V

Pakhom inquired of the merchant as to how to reach the country of the Bashkirs, and as soon as his informant had departed, got ready for the journey. Leaving his wife at home, and taking with him only his workman, he set out first for the town, where he bought a chest of tea, *vodka*, and other gifts, as the merchant had advised. Then the two drove on and on until they had covered 500 versts, and on the seventh day arrived at the camp of the Bashkirs. Everything turned out to be as the merchant had said. The people there lived in hide-tilted wagons, which were drawn up by the side of a river running through the open steppe. They neither ploughed the land nor ate corn, while over the steppe wandered droves of cattle and Cossack horses, the

[1] A sort of long coat.

foals being tied to the backs of the wagons and their dams driven up to them twice a day to give them suck. The chief sustenance of the people was mare's milk, which the women made into a drink called *kumiss*, and then churned the *kumiss* into cheese. In fact, the only drink the Bashkirs knew was either *kumiss* or tea, their only solid food mutton, and their only amusement pipe-playing. Nevertheless they all of them looked sleek and cheerful, and kept holiday the whole year round. In education they were sadly deficient, and knew no Russian, but were kindly and attractive folk for all that.

As soon as they caught sight of Pakhom they came out of their wagons and surrounded the guest. An interpreter was found, and Pakhom told him that he had come to buy land. At once the people were delighted, and, embracing Pakhom fervently, escorted him to a well-appointed wagon, where they made him sit down on a pile of rugs topped with soft cushions, and set about getting some tea and *kumiss* ready. A sheep was killed, and a meal served of the mutton, after which Pakhom produced the gifts from his *tarantass*,[1] distributed them round, and shared out also the tea. Then the Bashkirs fell to talking among themselves for a while, and finally bid the interpreter speak.

"I am to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they are greatly taken with you, and that it is our custom to meet the wishes of a guest in every possible way, in return for the presents given us. Since, therefore, you have given us presents, say now what there is of ours which you may desire, so that we may grant it you."

"What I particularly desire," replied Pakhom, "is some of your land. Where I come from," he continued, "there is not enough land, and what there is is ploughed out, whereas you have much land, and good land, such as I have never before beheld."

The interpreter translated, and the Bashkirs talked

[1] Light two-wheeled cart.

again among themselves. Although Pakhom could not understand what they were saying, he could see that they kept crying out something in merry tones and then bursting into laughter. At last they stopped and looked at Pakhom, while the interpreter spoke.

"I am to tell you," he said, "that in return for your kindness we are ready to sell you as much land as you may wish. Merely make a gesture with your hand to signify how much, and it shall be yours."

At this point, however, the people began to talk among themselves again, and to dispute about something. On Pakhom asking what it was, the interpreter told him: "Some of them say that the Starshina[1] ought to be asked first about the land, and that nothing should be done without him, while others say that that is not necessary."

VI

SUDDENLY, while the Bashkirs were thus disputing, there entered the wagon a man in a foxskin cap, at whose entry everyone rose, while the interpreter said to Pakhom: "This is the Starshina himself." At once Pakhom caught up the best *khalat* and offered it to the newcomer, as well as five pounds of tea. The Starshina duly accepted them, and then sat down in the place of honour, while the Bashkirs began to expound to him some matter or another. He listened and listened, then gave a smile, and spoke to Pakhom in Russian.

"Very well," he said, "pray choose your land wheresoever it pleases you. We have much land."

"So I am to take as much as I want!" thought Pakhom to himself. "Still, I must strengthen that bargain somehow. They might say, 'The land is yours,' and then take it away again."

"I thank you," he said aloud, "for your kind speech. As you say, you have much land, whereas

[1] Chieftain.

I am in need of some. I only desire to know precisely which of it is to be mine; wherefore it might be well to measure it off by some method and duly convey it to me. God only is lord of life and death, and, although you are good people who now give it to me, it might befall that your children would take it away again."

The Starshina smiled.

"The conveyance," he said, "is already executed. This present meeting is our mode of confirming it—and it could not be a surer one."

"But," said Pakhom, "I have been told that a merchant visited you recently, and that you sold him land and gave him a proper deed of conveyance. Pray, therefore, do the same with me."

The Starshina understood now.

"Very well," he replied. "We have a writer here, and will go to a town and procure the necessary seals."

"But what is your price for the land?" asked Pakhom.

"Our price," answered the Starshina, "is only 1000 roubles per day."

Pakhom did not understand this day-rate at all.

"How many *dessiatins* would that include?" he inquired presently.

"We do not reckon in that way," said the Starshina. "We sell only by the day. That is to say, as much land as you can walk round in a day, that much land is yours. That is our measure, and the price is 1000 roubles."

Pakhom was astounded.

"Why, a man might walk round a great deal in a day," he said.

The Starshina smiled again.

"Well, at all events," he said, "it will be yours. *Only*, there is one condition—namely, that if on that same day you do not return to the spot whence you started, your money is forfeited."

"But how do you decide upon that spot?" asked Pakhom.

"We take our stand," replied the Starshina, "upon whatsoever spot you may select. I and my people remain there, while you start off and describe a circle. Behind you will ride some of our young men, to plant stakes wherever you may desire that to be done. Thereafter, a plough will be driven round those stakes. Describe what circle you wish; only, by the time of the setting of the sun you must have returned to the place from which you started. As much land as you may circle, that much land will be yours."

So Pakhom accepted these terms, and it was agreed to make an early start on the morrow. Then the company talked again, drank more *kumiss*, and ate more mutton, passing on thence to tea, and the ceremonies being prolonged until nightfall. At length Pakhom was led to a bed of down and the Bashkirs dispersed, after first promising to gather on the morrow beyond the river and ride out to the appointed spot before sunrise.

VII

PAKHOM lay on his bed of down, but could not get a wink of sleep for thinking of the land which, as he said, "I am going to farm here."

"For I mean to mark out a very large 'Promised Land' to-morrow," he continued to himself. "I can cover at least fifty versts in the day, and fifty versts should enclose somewhere about 10,000 *dessiatins*. Then I shall be under nobody's thumb, and be able to afford a pair-ox plough and two labourers. I shall plough up the best land, and feed stock on the rest."

All that night Pakhom never closed his eyes, but dozed off for a short while just before dawn. The instant he did so he had a dream. He seemed to be lying in this identical wagon and listening to somebody laughing and talking outside. Wishing to see

who it was that was laughing so much, he went outside, and saw the Starshina sitting on the ground and holding his sides as he rolled about in ecstasies of mirth. Then in his dream Pakhom walked up to him and asked him what the joke was—and immediately saw that it was not the Starshina at all, but the merchant who had so lately visited him to tell him about this land. Then again, he had scarcely so much as said to the merchant, "Did I not see you at my home a little while ago?" when the merchant suddenly changed into the peasant from away down the Volga who had called at his farm in the old country. Finally Pakhom perceived that this peasant was not a peasant at all, but the Devil himself, with horns and hoofs, and that he was gazing fixedly at something as he sat there and laughed. Then Pakhom thought to himself: "What is he looking at, and why does he laugh so much?" And in his dream he stepped a little aside to look, and saw a man—barefooted, and clad only in a shirt and breeches—lying flat on his back, with his face as white as a sheet. And presently, looking yet more attentively at the man, Pakhom saw that the man was himself!

He gave a gasp and awoke—awoke feeling as if the dream were real. Then he looked to see if it were getting light yet, and saw that the dawn was near.

"It is time to start," he thought. "I must arouse these good people."

VIII

PAKHOM arose, awakened his workman in the *tarantass*,[1] and told him to put the horse in and go round to call the Bashkirs, since it was time to go out onto the steppe and measure off the land. So the Bashkirs arose and got themselves ready, and the Starshina also arrived. They breakfasted off *kumiss*, and were for giving Pakhom some tea, but he could not wait.

[1] Two-wheel travelling cart.

"If we are to go, let us go," he said. "It is fully time." So the Bashkirs harnessed up and set out, some on horseback, and some in carts, while Pakhom drove in his *tarantass* with his workman. They came out onto the steppe just as the dawn was breaking, and proceeded towards a little knoll—called in the Bashkir dialect a *shichan*. There the people in carts alighted, and everyone collected together. The Starshina approached Pakhom and pointed all round with his hand. "Whatsoever land you see from here," he said, "is ours. Choose whichsoever direction you like." Pakhom's eyes glowed, for all the land was grass, level as the palm of his hand, and black beneath the turf as a poppy-head. Only where there was a ravine was there a break in the grass—grass which was everywhere breast-high. The Starshina took off his foxskin cap, and laid it in the exact centre of the knoll. "This," he said, "will be the mark. Lay you your money in it, and your servant shall remain beside it while you are gone. From this mark you will start, and to this mark you will return. As much land as you circle, all of it will be yours."

Pakhom took out his money, and laid it in the cap. Then he divested himself of his cloak, stripped himself to his waistcoat, tightened his belt round his stomach, thrust a wallet with some bread into his bosom, tied a flask of water to his shoulder-strap, pulled up his long boots, and prepared to start. He kept debating within himself which direction it would be best to take, for the land was so good everywhere. "Oh, well, as it is all the same, I will walk towards the rising sun," he decided at length. So he turned his face that way, and kept trying his limbs while waiting for the sun to appear. "I must lose no time," he thought, "for I shall do my best walking while the air is yet cool."

Then the mounted Bashkirs also ascended the knoll, and stationed themselves behind Pakhom. No sooner had the sun shot his first rays above the horizon than Pakhom started forward and walked

out into the steppe, the mounted men riding behind him.

He walked neither slowly nor hurriedly. After he had gone about a verst he stopped, and had a stake put in. Then he went on again. He was losing his first stiffness and beginning to lengthen his stride. Presently he stopped again, and had another stake put in. He looked up at the sun—which was now lighting the knoll clearly, with the people standing there—and calculated that he had gone about five versts. He was beginning to grow warm now, so he took off his waistcoat, and then fastened up his belt again. Then he went on another five versts, and stopped. It was growing really hot now. He looked at the sun again, and saw that it was breakfast time. "One stage done!" he thought. "But there are four of them in the day, and it is early yet to change my direction. Nevertheless, I must take my boots off." So he sat down, took them off, and went on again. Walking was easier now. "As soon as I have covered another five versts," he reflected, "I will begin to bend round to the left. That spot was exceedingly well chosen. The further I go, the better the land is." So he kept straight on, although, when he looked round, the knoll was almost out of sight, and the people on it looked like little black ants.

"Now," he said to himself at length, "I have made the circle large enough, and must bend round." He had sweated a good deal and was thirsty, so he raised the flask and took a drink. Then he had a stake put in at that point, and bent round sharply to the left. On he went and on, through the high grass and the burning heat. He was beginning to tire now, and, glancing at the sun, saw that it was dinner-time. "Now," he thought to himself, "I might venture to take a rest." So he stopped and ate some bread, though without sitting down, since he said to himself: "If I once sat down I should go on to *lying* down, and so end by going off to sleep." He waited a little, therefore, till he felt rested, and then went on again.

At first he found walking easy, for the meal had revived his strength, but presently the sun seemed to grow all the hotter as it began to slant towards evening. Pakhom was nearly worn out now, yet he merely thought to himself: "An hour's pain may a century gain."

He had traversed about ten versts of this lap of the circle, and was about to bend inwards again to the left, when he caught sight of an excellent bit of land round a dry ravine. It would be a pity to leave that out. "Flax would grow so splendidly there!" he thought. So he kept straight on until he had taken in the ravine, and, having had a stake planted at the spot, again wheeled inwards. Looking towards the knoll he could see that the people there were almost indistinguishable. They could not be less than fifteen versts away. "Well," he thought, "I have covered the two long laps of the circuit, and must take this last one by the shortest cut possible." So he started upon the last lap, and quickened his pace. Once again he looked at the sun. It was now drawing near to the time of the evening meal, and he had only covered two versts of the distance. The starting point was still thirteen versts away. "I must hurry straight along now," he said to himself, "however rough the country be. I must not take in a single extra piece on the way. I have enclosed sufficient as it is." And Pakhom headed straight for the knoll.

IX

He pressed on straight in its direction, yet found walking very difficult now. His feet were aching badly, for he had chafed and bruised them, and they were beginning to totter under him. He would have given anything to have rested for a while, yet knew that he must not if he was ever to regain the knoll before sunset. The sun at least would not wait. Nay, it was like a driver ever lashing him on. From time

to time he staggered. "Surely I have not miscalculated?" he thought to himself. "Surely I have not taken in too much land ever to get back, however much I hurry? There is such a long way to go yet, and I am dead beat. It cannot be that all my money and toil have gone in vain? Ah, well. I must do my best."

Pakhom pulled himself together, and broke into a run. He had torn his feet till they were bleeding, yet he still ran on, ran on, ran further and further. Waistcoat, boots, flask, cap—he flung them all away. "Ah!" was his thought, "I was too pleased with what I saw. Now everything is lost, and I shall never reach the mark before sunset." His fears served to render him only the more breathless, but he still ran on, his shirt and breeches clinging to his limbs with sweat, and his mouth parched. In his breast there were a pair of blacksmith's bellows working, and in his heart a steam hammer, while his legs seemed to be breaking under him and to be no longer his own. He had lost all thought of the land now. All that he thought of was to avoid dying from exertion. Yet, although he was so afraid of dying, he could not stop. "To have gone so far," he thought, "and then to stop! Why, they would think me a fool!" By this time he could hear the Bashkirs cheering and shouting to him, and their cries stirred his heart with fresh spirit. On, on he ran with his last remaining strength, while the sun was just touching the horizon. Ah, but he was close to the spot now! He could see the people on the knoll waving their hands to him and urging him on. He could see the foxskin cap lying on the ground, the money in it, the Starshina sitting beside it with his hands pressed to his sides. Suddenly Pakhom remembered his dream. "Yet I have much land now," he thought, "if only God should bring me safe to live upon it. But my heart misgives me that I have killed myself." Still he ran on. For the last time he looked at the sun. Large and red, it had touched the earth, and was beginning to sink below

the horizon. Pakhom reached the knoll just as it set. "Ah!" he cried in his despair, for he thought that everything was lost. Suddenly, however, he remembered that he could not see from below so well as could the people on the knoll above him, and that to them the sun would still seem not to have set. He rushed at the slope, and could see as he scrambled up it that the cap was still there. Then he stumbled and fell—yet in the very act of falling stretched out his hands towards the cap—and touched it!

"Ah, young man," cried the Starshina, "you have earned much land indeed!"

Pakhom's servant ran to his master and tried to raise him, but blood was running from his mouth. Pakhom lay there dead. The servant cried out in consternation, but the Starshina remained sitting on his haunches—laughing, and holding his hands to his sides.

At length he got up, took a spade from the ground, and threw it to the servant.

"Bury him," was all he said.

The Bashkirs arose and departed. Only the servant remained. He dug a grave of the same length as Pakhom's form from head to heels—three Russian ells—and buried him.

THAT WHEREBY MEN LIVE

I

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us.

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iii. and iv.)

Once upon a time a cobbler lodged with his wife and children at a *muzhik's*. He had no hut or land of his own, but supported himself solely by cobbling. Bread was dear, and work cheap, and he lived from hand to mouth. He and his wife shared a sheepskin coat between them—and it was a ragged one at that!—but for the last two years he had been saving up to buy a skin for a new one.

By the autumn he had amassed a small sum. Three roubles in paper money lay in his wife's box, while five roubles and twenty copecks were due to him from certain *muzhiks* in the village. So one morning after breakfast he put on his wife's twill-wadded jacket over his shirt, and over that, again, his own woollen *kaftan*.[1] Then he thrust the three one-rouble notes into his pocket, cut himself a walking-stick, and set out. As he went along he thought to himself:

[1] Under-jacket or smock.

"I will first get the five roubles out of those *muzhiks*, then add to them the three roubles which I have already, and buy a sheepskin for a new coat."

So he reached the village and went to call upon the first *muzhik*. The *muzhik* was not at home, and although his wife promised to send her husband along with the money before the week was out, she could not pay the cobbler anything at present. Then the cobbler went to the hut of another *muzhik*, but the owner swore by God above that he was destitute. All that he could do was to clear off a little debt of twenty copecks for the stitching of a boot.

Now, the cobbler had been reckoning that, if he failed to get the money, he might be able to get a sheepskin on credit; but the vendor of sheepskins reckoned otherwise.

"Bring me *all* the cash," he said, "and *then* you can pick what skin you like. We all of us know how difficult it is to get quit of a debt."

Thus it came about that the cobbler did no business that morning, beyond being paid twenty copecks for a stitching job and receiving another pair of boots to mend. Depressed at the result, he went and spent the twenty copecks on *vodka*, and then started for home. In the morning the day had seemed to him frosty and cold, but now it felt quite warm, even without a fur coat. As he walked along he kept talking to himself as he struck at frozen lumps of snow with the stick which he carried in one hand and swung by their laces the pair of boots which he carried in the other.

"I feel quite warm without a sheepskin," he remarked. "I have drunk only the merest drop, yet it is bubbling finely in my veins. I don't need a sheepskin. I am going along now as comfortably as can be. That is the sort of man I am. What have I to fret about? I can worry along without that coat. I shan't want it in a lifetime. Only, of course—there's my wife. *She* keeps worrying about it. Well, it is a shameful thing that one should do a job for a

man, and he should lead you a dance for nothing. But just you wait, my fine fellow. If you don't bring me my money this week I'll have the cap off your head—by God I will! A fine thing indeed! Then there was that other one—paid me a beggarly twenty copecks! What can one do with twenty copecks? Drink them, that's all. He swore he was hard up. 'Are you hard up, then,' I might have said, 'and not I as well? You have a hut and cattle and everything, while I have my all on my back. You grow your own bread, while I have to buy it. Come what may, I have to raise three roubles a week for bread alone, and when I get home to-day the stock will be finished, and out I shall have to fork another rouble-and-a-half. Pay me what you owe me.' "

Thus the cobbler went rambling on, until he came to the roadside chapel at the turning. Something showing white behind it caught his eye. Dusk was closing in, and although the cobbler peered and peered at the thing he could not make out what it was. "There never used to be a stone of any kind there," he thought. "Is it a bullock, then? No, it hardly looks like one. It seems to have a head like a man, somehow, only it is white all over. But what should bring a man there?"

He took a step or two nearer, and the thing became distinguishable. Strange to say, it *was* a man, whether dead or alive—a man sitting motionless, and quite naked, with his back against the chapel. The cobbler grew nervous as he thought to himself: "Somebody must have murdered him, taken his money, and thrown the body there. Just you go on, and see to it that *you* aren't the next one to be robbed."

So the cobbler began to move forward past the chapel. As he drew level with it the man became hidden from view, so the cobbler stopped, stepped backward a pace or two, peered about him, and saw that the man was now sitting erect, and moving his body to and fro as though trying to catch sight of him. The cobbler's fears increased.

"Shall I approach him or shall I go on?" he debated. "To approach him might land me in the Lord knows what. How am I to tell what he is? He cannot be up to any good here. If I went near him he might spring out upon me and throttle me before I could get away. And even if he didn't throttle me I might have an awkward tussle with him. What could one do with a naked man? There would be no getting rid of him until he had got everything I have. The Lord defend us!"

He quickened his pace, and was nearly past the chapel when his conscience began to prick him.

"What is the matter with you, Simon?" he asked himself. "The man may be dying miserably, and yet you pass him by as if you were afraid of him! Are you so wonderfully rich, then, that you need guard against having your valuables stolen? Fie, for shame, Simon!"

II

So he turned back and approached the man. As he did so he peered at him, and saw that he was a young fellow in the prime of life, and that his body bore no marks of violence. He seemed merely frozen and terrified as he sat leaning forward without looking at the approaching cobbler, as though too weak to raise his eyes to do so. Just as Simon reached him, however, he lifted his head suddenly, like one recovering from a swoon, and, opening his eyes wide, fixed them on Simon's face. That look altogether reassured the cobbler, and, throwing down the boots which he carried, he unclasped his belt, placed it in the boots, and began to take off his *kaftan*.

"Come!" he said. "What is this? You must have something to put on. Here you are,"—and, taking the man under the arms, he essayed to lift him. The man, however, rose unaided, and Simon then saw that his body was slender and clean, while his legs and arms bore no signs of injury, and his face

was mild in expression. The cobbler drew the *kaftan* over the man's shoulders, and since the latter had some difficulty in finding the sleeves, Simon guided his arms into them, then pulled the coat up, straightened out the skirts, and belted them round. Next he took his ragged cap off, and was just about to place it on the naked man's head when he felt the cold strike upon his crown.

"I am bald all over," he thought, "whereas he has long, curly hair,"—and he put his cap on again. "I should do better to put those boots on him," he added to himself, and, sitting down, did so.

The man thus clothed, the cobbler said:

"There you are, brother. Now walk along with me and get yourself warm. Things like this cannot be helped. Do you feel able to move?"

The man looked in a friendly way at Simon, but said nothing.

"Why don't you speak?" asked the cobbler. "We can't spend the winter here. We must get home to my lodgings. Take my stick to lean upon if you feel weak. Now then, come along."

The man then started and walked easily enough and without lagging behind. As they proceeded Simon asked him:

"Where do you hail from?"

"From another part than this."

"Yes, I know that, for I know everyone about here. But how did you come to be by the chapel?"

"I cannot say."

"Someone must have assaulted you, then?'

"No, no one assaulted me. God was punishing me."

"Of course; all things come of God, and it is our duty to submit to them. Yet where were you bound for?"

"For nowhere in particular."

This rather surprised Simon. The man did not seem like a rogue, and yet, civil though his speech was, he would reveal nothing about himself. Simon re-

flected, however, "One never knows how things may be," and then continued to his companion:

"Well, come to my lodgings now, and you can go on your way later."

So he walked on, and the stranger made no attempt to leave him, but kept by his side. The wind was now rising, and getting through Simon's shirt, with the result that the drink was beginning to die out of him and to leave him chilled. He kept wheezing through his nose as he strode ahead and, wrapping his wife's jacket about him, reflected:

"This is what that precious sheepskin has brought me to! I went out for a sheepskin, and am returning without even so much as a *kaftan* to my back—let alone that I am bringing a perfectly naked man with me! Matrena will not be pleased, I am afraid,"—and that last thought made him nervous. Yet when he looked at the stranger he remembered the glance which the man had given him by the oratory, and his heart, somehow, leapt for joy.

III

SIMON'S wife finished her duties betimes that day. She chopped the firewood, fetched water, fed the children, had something to eat herself, and then debated when she should make bread—to-day or to-morrow. There was still a large piece left.

"If," she thought, "Simon gets dinner there, and so does not eat much for supper, the bread will last over to-morrow."

Then she turned and turned the piece over, and finally decided: "I won't make bread to-day. There is only meal enough left for one loaf. We can last over till Friday."

So she put the piece aside, and sat down at the table to sew a patch onto her husband's shirt. As she stitched away she thought of Simon, and wondered whether he had bought a new sheepskin for a coat.

"I do hope the sheepskin-seller won't cheat him," she reflected; "but that man of mine is a regular simpleton. He never cheats a soul himself, yet a little child can lead him by the nose. Eight roubles is no trifling sum. He ought to get a good skin for that—if not a tanned one, at all events a good rough one. How starved I have been all this winter without one! Why, I couldn't even go to the brook, or anywhere! This morning, again, Simon went out with all our clothes upon him, and left me nothing to wear. He is late in coming home, too. It is time he *were* home. I hope he hasn't gone making merry, that rascal of mine."

This thought had only just passed through her mind when a tread was heard on the steps outside, and someone entered. Matrena made fast her needle in her work, went out into the porch, and there saw that *two* persons had come in—namely, Simon, and some man or other in felt boots and without a cap.

At once she caught the smell of *vodka* proceeding from her husband. "So he *has* been making merry!" she thought; and when, in addition, she saw that he lacked his *kaftan* and was clad only in her jacket, as well as had nothing in his hand and nothing to say for himself beyond a shrug of the shoulders, her heart was torn within her. "He has drunk the money away," she thought again. "Yes, he has been hob-nobbing with this tramp, and then brought him home as well!"

She ushered them into the hut in front of her. Then she saw that the stranger was a thin, lanky-looking young man—and that he was wearing their own *kaftan!* No shirt could be seen beneath it, nor cap above it. When he had entered he remained standing perfectly still, with his eyes cast down, so that Matrena thought: "He can't possibly be honest, for he seems so nervous."

She frowned grimly, and crossed over to the stove to watch what they would do next.

Simon merely took off his cap, and sat down on the bench as though perfectly conscience-free.

"Well, Matrena?" he said. "Get us some supper, will you?"

Matrena only snorted under her breath, and remained standing by the stove. She never stirred, but looked at them each in turn, and shook her head ominously. Simon then saw that his wife was put out about something, but, there being no help for it, he appeared not to notice her, but took the stranger by the arm.

"Sit you down, brother," he said, "and we will have some supper." The stranger seated himself on the bench beside Simon.

"Have you anything cooked that you could give us?" the latter went on to his wife.

Then temper got the better of Matrena.

"Yes, I *have* something cooked," she retorted, "but not for *you*. *You*, I can see, have drunk your senses away. You go out to buy a sheepskin, and come home without even a *kaftan*—and with a naked tramp in tow as well. I have no supper for a pair of drunkards like you."

"Come, come, Matrena! Why wag your tongue so foolishly? You should first have asked me who the man is."

"Well, suppose you tell me, then, what you have done with the money?"

For answer, Simon approached the *kaftan*, took the paper money out of one of the pockets, and unrolled it.

"Here is the money," he said. "Trofinoff did not pay up to-day, but has promised to do so to-morrow."

But Matrena's rage only increased. He had brought no sheepskin with him, had put their one and only *kaftan* onto a naked man's back, and brought him home! She snatched the money from the table and ran to hide it, saying as she did so:

"I have no supper for you. One can't feed every bare-backed drunkard who comes along."

"Now then, Matrena, hold your tongue. You should give people a chance to explain."

"How much sense is one likely to hear from a drunken fool indeed? It was not for nothing that I never wanted to marry a tipsy brute like you! My mother gave me some linen—and you drank it away! You go out to buy a sheepskin—and you drink that away too!"

Simon tried hard to explain to his wife that he had only drunk away twenty copecks, as well as to tell her where he had found the stranger, but she would hardly let him get a single word in, interrupting him at every third one, and even raking up sores fully ten years old.

On and on she went, until finally she leapt upon him and seized him by the sleeve.

"Give me my jacket!" she cried. "It is the only one I have, yet you sneaked it this morning to wear yourself! Give it to me, I say, you tow-stuffed cur! May you die of a fit some day!"

Simon hastened to take the jacket off, turning the sleeves inside out as he did so, but since his wife held onto it all the time, the result was that its seams split open. Seizing it and throwing it over her head, Matrena made for the door, and was just about to leave the room, when she stopped. The truth was that her heart was relenting, and she wanted both to subdue her temper and to learn who the man was.

IV

She stopped, therefore, and said:

"If the man was honest, he would not have been going about with never a shirt to his back; and if you yourself had been up to any good to-day you would have told me at once where you picked up this dandy of yours."

"Very well, I will tell you now," answered Simon. "As I was passing the chapel I found this man lying naked and frozen. It is not summer-time now, you

must remember, that a man should go naked. God led me to him, else he must have perished. Well, what could I do? Such things do not happen for nothing. I took him, clothed him, and brought him here. That is all. Calm your temper, Matrena, for to give way to it is sinful. Remember that we must all of us die some day."

Matrena was about to burst out scolding again, when she glanced at the stranger and remained silent. He was sitting there, quite motionless, on the extreme edge of the bench, with his hands clasped upon his knees, his head sunk upon his breast, his eyes closed, and his face lined and contorted as though something were stifling him.

"Matrena," went on Simon, "is there nothing of God within you?"

As she heard these words she threw another glance at the stranger, and her heart suddenly contracted with pity. She turned back from the door, went to the stove, and drew out thence some supper. She set a tea-pot on the table, poured out some *kvas*,[1] produced their last piece of bread, and furnished the two men with a knife and spoon apiece.

"Eat away," she said.

Simon nudged the stranger. "Draw up nearer," he urged him. Then he cut some bread, divided it up, and they began supper. But Matrena sat by the corner of the table, her head upon her hand, and gazed at the stranger.

She felt sorry for him, as well as attracted towards him; and when suddenly his face cleared and the lines vanished from his brow as he raised his eyes to hers and smiled, her heart leapt within her.

After supper she washed up the things, and then began to question him.

"Where do you come from?" she asked.

"From somewhere else than here."

"Then how came you to fall by the wayside?"

"I cannot say."

[1] A liquor made of rye-meal and rye-malt.

"Who was it took your clothes from you?"

"God was punishing me."

"But you were lying there naked?"

"Yes, I was lying there naked and frozen, when Simon saw me and had compassion upon me. He took off his *kaftan* and put it upon my shoulders, and bid me come with him hither. And here you have given me food and drink, and have shown me kindness. May God do so unto you also!"

Matrena rose, took from the window-sill an old shirt of Simon's—the same one which she had been sewing—and gave it to the stranger. She also found trousers, and these too she gave him.

"Here," she said; "I see that you have no shirt. Put these on, and then go to rest where you like—whether on the bench or on the stove."

The stranger stripped himself of the *kaftan*, put on the shirt and trousers, and lay down upon the bench. Matrena extinguished the light, took the *kaftan*, and went to her husband.

She covered herself over with the skirts of the *kaftan* and lay down, but not to sleep, for the stranger would not leave her thoughts. When she remembered that he had eaten their last crust, and that there was none left for to-morrow, as also that she had given away the shirt and trousers, she felt vexed: but when she remembered likewise the stranger's smile her heart leapt within her.

For a long time she could not sleep, but lay listening. Simon also could not sleep, and kept drawing the *kaftan* over him.

"Simon!"

"Yes?"

"You have eaten our last piece of bread, and I have no more made. What we shall do to-morrow I don't know. I must beg some of neighbour Malania."

"Oh, but we shall manage to live and have enough," said Simon.

For a little while after this his wife lay without speaking.

"He seems a very fine young fellow," she said at last; "only, why does he tell us nothing about himself?"

"He cannot, I suppose."

"Simon!"

"Eh?"

"We give things away, but why does no one give to *us?*"

Simon was at a loss for an answer, but, remarking, "We can talk of that another time," turned over and went to sleep.

V

In the morning Simon awoke. The children were still asleep, and his wife had gone out to borrow some bread of the neighbours. The stranger of yesterday was sitting alone on the bench, dressed in the old shirt and trousers, and his face turned upwards. And that face was even brighter than it had been the night before.

So Simon said to him:

"Well, my good friend? The stomach craves for bread, and the body for raiment. One must earn both. Do you know any trade?"

"No, none," replied the stranger.

Simon was rather surprised at this, and said:

"But you would try, would you not? Men can learn anything if they wish."

"Yes, men work, and so also will I."

"What is your name, then?"

"Michael."

"Well, Michael, you do not tell us anything about yourself, and that is your own affair, but we must earn our living. If you work as I will teach you we will feed you."

"The Lord be good to you! I will learn. Only show me how."

So Simon took a straight wax-end, twined it on his fingers, and made a knot in it.

"The work is not difficult," he said. "Watch me."

Michael watched him, then twined the thread on his own fingers, twisted it round in a moment, and had made the knot.

Then Simon showed him how to weld, and Michael understood the art at once. Next, his master showed him how to insert a stitch and draw it tight through the seam, and that too Michael understood immediately.

Whatever Simon taught him Michael learnt readily, so that by the third day he was able to work as though he had been a cobbler all his life. He never made mistakes, and ate but little. Only, at times he would rest for a moment and look silently upwards. He never went out of doors, never spoke of his own affairs, and never jested or laughed.

Indeed, the only time he had been seen to smile was on that first evening when Matrena had got him ready the supper.

VI

Day by day, and week by week, a year crept round, while Michael still lived with Simon and worked for him. It was spread abroad of Simon's workman that no one could sew boots so neatly and so strongly as he, and people had begun to come to Simon for boots from all the district round, so that his means increased.

One winter's day Simon and Michael were sitting working together when there came driving towards the hut a three-horsed coach-sledge, gay with bells. The two shoemakers looked through the window, and saw that the sledge had stopped opposite the hut, and that a footman had leapt from the box and was opening the door. Then a gentleman in a fur coat stepped out of the vehicle, approached Simon's dwelling, and mounted the steps. Matrena ran to meet him, and opened the door wide. The gentleman

bowed his head, entered the hut, and straightened himself up again, although his head nearly touched the ceiling and he filled a whole corner of the room.

Simon rose, saluted him, and was astonished at the great man. He seldom saw such people there, for he himself was brown in the face, Michael thin, and Matrena as wizened as a chip of wood. But this man came of another world altogether, with his ruddy, bibulous countenance, neck like a bull's, and figure of cast-iron. The gentleman breathed hard, took off his fur coat, sat down upon the bench, and said:

"Which of you is the master bootmaker?"

Simon stepped forward, saying:

"I am, your honour."

Thereupon the gentleman shouted to his footman:

"Hi, Thedka![1] Bring me the stuff here."

The footman entered with a parcel, which the gentleman took and laid upon the table.

"Untie it," he said.

The footman did so, whereupon the gentleman tapped the leather which it contained with his finger, and said to Simon:

"Look here, bootmaker. Do you see this?"

"Yes, your nobility," answered Simon.

"And do you know what it is?"

Simon fingered it a moment and replied:

"It is good leather."

"'Good leather' indeed!" cried the gentleman. "You blockhead, you have never seen such leather in your life before. It is of German make, and cost twenty roubles."

Simon was a little intimidated by this, and said:

"Ah, well, what chance do we ever get to see such leather?"

"Well, well. But could you make me a pair of boots out of it?"

"Possibly so, your honour."

"'Possibly so'! But you must clearly understand what you are going to work upon and what you are

[1] A diminutive of Theodor

going to make of it. I want a pair of boots which would last a year, would never tread over, and never split at the seams. If you can make me such boots, then set to work and cut out the stuff at once; but if you cannot, then do neither of those things. I tell you beforehand that if the new pair should split or tread over before a year is out, I will clap you in prison; but if they should *not* do so, then I will pay you ten roubles for your work."

Simon hesitated, and knew not what to say. He looked at Michael, nudged him with his elbow, and whispered:

"What do you think about it, brother?"

For answer Michael nodded, as much as to say: "Yes, take the work."

So Simon obeyed Michael, and undertook to make a pair of boots which would not tread over or split within a year.

Then the gentleman called the footman once more, ordered him to take off his left boot for him, and stretched out his foot.

"Take my measure," he said.

Simon sewed together a strip of paper about ten *vershoks*[1] long and looked at it. Then he knelt down, wiped his hand carefully on his apron so as not to soil the gentleman's sock, and started to measure. First he measured the sole, and then the instep. Next, he was going on to measure the calf, but the strip of paper would not go round it, for the muscle of the gentleman's leg was as thick as a beam.

"Take care you don't make them too tight in the leg," remarked the great man.

So Simon sewed together another strip, while the gentleman sat and wriggled his toes about in his sock and the people in the hut gazed at him. Presently he caught sight of Michael.

"Who is this you have with you?" he asked.

"That is my skilled workman, who will sew your boots."

[1] The vershok = 1.68 inches.

"Look you, then," said the gentleman to Michael, "and remember this—that you are to sew them so that they will last a year."

Simon glanced at Michael, and saw that he was not so much as looking at the gentleman, but staring into the corner behind him, as though gazing at someone. Michael gazed and gazed, until suddenly his face broke out into a smile and he brightened all over.

"What are you grinning at, you fool?" inquired the gentleman. "You had better see to it that the boots are ready when I want them."

To which Michael replied: "They shall be ready whenever wanted."

"Very well."

The gentleman put his boot on again, then his fur coat, buttoned himself up, and moved towards the door; but as he forgot to bend his head down he bumped it heavily against the lintel. He swore violently and rubbed his pate, then got into the sledge, and drove away.

"What a flint-stone!" remarked Simon. "He nearly knocked the lintel out of place with his head, yet he hardly cared!"

"How could he *not* get hardened with the life he leads?" replied Matrena. "Even death itself could not take such an iron rivet of a man."

VII

"Well, we have undertaken the work now," continued Simon to Michael, "and we must take care not to go amiss over it. This leather is valuable stuff, and the gentleman is short-tempered. No, there must be no mistakes. You have the sharper eyes, as well as the greater skill now in your fingers, so take these measures and cut out the stuff, while I finish sewing those toe-caps."

Michael took the leather obediently, spread it out

upon the table, folded it in two, took a knife, and began to cut it.

Now, Matrena happened to approach Michael and catch sight of the way in which he was working. She was quite astonished at what she saw, for she was pretty well acquainted with the shoe-making art. In short, she perceived that he was cutting the leather, not into the ordinary boot shape, but into rounded pieces.

She felt inclined to say something, but thought to herself: "It must be that I do not understand how gentlemen's boots ought to be made. Michael must know better than I do, so I won't interfere."

When Michael had finished cutting out the two shapes, he took thread and began sewing them up, not in boot fashion, at the two ends, but at one end only, as they sew *bosoviki*.[1]

Matrena was surprised the more at this, yet still she did not interfere, and Michael went on sewing until the dinner-hour. Then Simon rose, looked at Michael—and saw that of the gentleman's leather he had made a pair of *bosoviki!*

Simon groaned. "How is it," he thought, "that Michael has lived with me for a whole year without making a mistake, and now has made such a mistake as this? The gentleman ordered heavy-soled boots, but Michael has gone and made a pair of soleless *bosoviki*, and spoilt the leather. How shall I ever settle things with the gentleman? One cannot get such leather as that every day."

Then he said aloud to Michael:

"My good fellow, what have you done? You have simply ruined me. The gentleman ordered boots, but what have you gone and made instead?"

And he was just about to give Michael a rating for it when there came a clatter at the door-ring, and somebody knocked. They looked through the window, and saw that a man had arrived on horseback and was tying up his horse; and when, pre-

[1] Shoes put on the feet of a corpse.

sently, the door was opened there entered the footman of the very gentleman himself.

"Good day to you," he said.

"Good day. What can we do for you?"

"My mistress has sent me about the boots.'

"Yes. What about them?"

"This indeed—that my master will not want them now. He has been dead some time."

"What do you say?"

"Nay, but 'tis true. He died in the sledge on the way home from your hut. The sledge had reached home, and we were just going to help him to alight, when we saw that he had slipped to the floor like a meal-bag and breathed his last. There he lay dead, and it was only with great difficulty that we lifted him out. Then my mistress sent for me and said: 'Go and tell the bootmaker that the gentleman who called to order the boots and left the material for them will not need them now, but that the bootmaker is to use the material to make a pair of *bosoviki* for the corpse, and to make them as quickly as he can. Wait until they are made, and bring them back with you.' So I came here at once."

Michael gathered up the cuttings of leather from the table, and rolled them into a coil. Then he took the *bosoviki* which were lying ready, rapped them one against the other, wiped them with his apron, and gave them to the footman. The latter took them

"Good day, my masters," he said, "and good luck to you."

VIII

Another year passed, and again two more, until Michael was now completing his sixth with Simon. He still lived as of old. He never went out, never spoke of himself, and had smiled twice only since he came—namely, when the goodwife had given him supper on his first arrival, and when the rich gentleman had been there. Simon was well pleased with his

workman, and had never returned to the subject of where he came from. Indeed, his chief fear was lest he should go away again.

One day they were all of them sitting together at home. The goodwife was soldering iron on the stove, while the children were running about over the benches and peeping out of the windows. Near one of the latter Simon was seam-drawing, and, near the other, Michael nailing a heel onto a boot.

The little boy came running along the bench to Michael, leant over his shoulder, and looked out of the window.

"Uncle Michael," he cried, "just look! There is a lady and two little girls coming to our hut, and one of the little girls is lame!"

As soon as the little boy said this Michael threw down his work, turned to the window, and looked into the roadway.

Simon was surprised at this. As a rule, Michael never looked out, yet now he was glued to the window and gazing intently at something. Simon too looked out, and saw a lady making straight for the forecourt. She was well dressed, and was leading her two little girls clad in fur jackets, with shawls over their heads. These little girls were so exactly alike that it would have been difficult to distinguish the one from the other, but for the fact that one of them had something amiss with her left leg, and walked with a limp.

The lady ascended the steps to the porch, fumbled at the door, turned the handle, and entered. Then, pushing the little girls in front of her, she walked forward into the hut.

"Good day to you, mistress," she said.

"Pray excuse us, madam. What can we do for you?"

The lady sat down by the table, while the little girls pressed close to her knee, and the occupants of the hut gazed at them with curiosity.

"I want a pair of *bashmaki*[1] made for each of these little girls to wear in the spring," said the lady.

[1] Women's boots.

"Very well, madam. We have never made such small sizes before, but it could be done. You could have the boots either leather throughout or lined with linen. Here is Michael, my skilled workman."

As Simon glanced at Michael he saw that he had thrown his work down and was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the little girls. Simon was astonished. True, they made a pretty spectacle, with their black eyes, round, rosy cheeks, and smart little shawls and jackets, yet he could not understand why Michael looked at them somehow as if he knew them. However, Simon went on talking to the lady and arranging terms. The latter duly settled, he set about stitching together a paper measure, while the lady lifted the lame little girl onto her knee and said:

"Take both the sets of measures from this little girl, and make one *bashmak* for her crooked foot and three ordinary ones. The two children take exactly the same size, for they are twins."

Simon took the measures, and then asked concerning the little girl:

"How comes she to be lame? She is such a pretty little lady! Was she born so?"

"No, she was overlaid by her mother."

Matrena, who had stepped closer in the hope of finding out who the lady and children were, put in:

"Then you are not their mother?"

"No, good mistress. In fact, they are no relation of mine at all, only adopted children."

"You are not their mother! Yet you seem very fond of them?"

"How could I not be fond of them? I suckled them both. I had a child of my own once, but God took it unto Himself. Yet I was not so fond of it as I am of them."

"And whose are they?"

IX

THEN the lady unbosomed herself, and related as follows:

"Six years ago it befell that these two little girls lost both their father and their mother in the same week. The father was buried on the Tuesday, and the mother died on the following Friday. Yes, they were left fatherless for three days, and on the third day their mother died also. At that time I and my husband were living in a country place where they and ourselves were neighbours and our yards adjoined. The father of these children—a peasant—was a single man, and worked as a forester. One day a tree was being cut down, when it fell upon him, and crushed out his very vitals. He was carried home, but died immediately, and the woman who had lived with him was delivered the same week of twins—of these two little ones here. Poverty, loneliness—that was what they were born to, for the mother had no woman, old or young, to attend upon her. She was alone when she was brought to bed, and alone too when she died.

"Next morning I chanced to go to pay her a neighbourly visit, and when I entered the hut I saw that the poor woman was already stiff and cold, and that in her death agony she had overlaid one of the little girls—had crushed her and bent her foot crooked. Well, I sent for help, and they washed the corpse and laid it out; then made a coffin, and buried her. They were kind-hearted people, in spite of the woman having been neither wife nor maid. But now that the little girls were left orphans, which of us was to take them? I alone of our women was then suckling a child—had been suckling my first little one, a boy, for eight weeks past. So for the time being I took charge of the twins also, after the peasants had debated together as to what should be done with them and said to me, 'Do you keep them for the present, Maria, and that will give us time to settle something.'

I began by suckling the uninjured child only, since I did not expect the other one to live. Then I thought to myself: 'Why should this little one's angel spirit be left to fade away?' So, filled with compassion for it also, I nurtured the two as I did my own child—all three of them at the same breast. I was young and strong and able to suckle well, for God had filled my breasts to overflowing. I would feed two of them at once, while the third lay waiting. Then one of them would be satisfied, and I would take the third one to my breast. Yet God ordained that, although I should nourish these two children to childhood, I should bury my own little one within its second year; and God has never given me another one. In time my means increased, and now I am lodging at the mill here with the miller. I have a good income and live comfortably, but, alas! I have no children of my own. How, then, I could ever bear to live alone without these little ones, or how I could ever rest without them to love and care for, I cannot think! They are to me as wax is to the candle,"—and the lady drew the lame child to her with the one hand as with the other she wiped the tears from her cheeks. "Of a surety," she added, "it is a true saying which says: 'Without father or mother we may live, but without God—never.'"

Thus they talked for a while among themselves, after which the lady rose to depart. Her hosts saw her to the door, and then glanced at Michael. He was sitting with his hands folded upon his knees as he gazed intently upwards and smiled.

X

SIMON approached him. "What is it, Michael?" he said.

Michael rose from the bench, laid aside his work, took off his apron, and bowed to the master and his wife.

"Pardon me, good master and mistress," he said. "God has pardoned me. Do you also pardon me?"

Then Simon and his wife saw that light was proceeding from Michael. Simon bowed low before him in his turn, and said:

"Michael, I see that you are more than simple man, and that I may not detain or question you. Only tell me one thing. Why is it that when I first found you and brought you home you were downcast of countenance, but smiled immediately that my wife offered you supper, and became thenceforth brighter? Again, why did you smile the second time when the gentleman was ordering the boots, and became even brighter than before? And lastly, why did you smile the third time and become bright all over when the lady brought the little girls hither? Tell me, Michael, why you smiled those three times, and why this light is shining from you now?"

Then Michael answered him:

"This light is shining from me now because I have been punished and God has pardoned me again. And I smiled those three times because it was laid upon me that I should learn three words of God, and those three words I have now learnt. The first word I learnt when your wife had compassion upon me. That is why I smiled the first time. The second word I learnt when the rich man was ordering the boots. That is why I smiled the second time. And the third and last word I learnt just now when I beheld the little girls. That is why I smiled the third time."

Then Simon said:

"Tell me also, Michael, why God punished you, and what those three words of God may be, that I too may learn them?"

And Michael answered:

"God punished me because I disobeyed Him. I was an angel in Heaven, and disobeyed God. He sent me down to earth to bear away a woman's soul. To earth I flew, and there saw the woman lying sick and but just delivered of twins—of two little girls.

The children were stirring beside their mother, yet she could not put them to her breasts. Then she saw me, and understood that God had sent me to fetch away her soul. Weeping, she cried out: 'Angel of God, they have just buried my husband, who was killed by a tree in the forest. I have neither sister nor aunt nor grandmother, so that there is no one to bring up my little ones. Do not take away my soul, but leave me to suckle my children, and to rear them, and to set them on their feet. Little children cannot live without either father or mother.' So I hearkened to the mother, laid one child upon her breast, gave the other one into her arms, and ascended again to God in Heaven. I flew to God and said: 'I could not take away the soul from that childing mother. The father has been killed by a tree, and the mother has just been delivered of twins. She besought me not to take away her soul, saying: "Let me suckle my children, and rear them, and set them on their feet. Little children cannot live without father or mother." So I did not take away the mother's soul.' Then God said to me: 'Go thou and fetch away the soul of that childing woman, and thou shalt learn three words. Thou shalt learn both what that is which dwelleth in men, and what that is which is not given to men, and what that is whereby men live. When thou hast learnt these words thou shalt return to Heaven.' So I flew back to earth, and took away the soul of the childing woman. The children slipped from her breasts, and the dead body rolled back upon the bed, crushing as it did so one of the little ones and bending aside the little one's foot. Then I rose above the village, and tried to bear the soul to God, but a wind caught me, so that my wings hung down and were blown from me, and the soul returned alone to Him, while I myself fell to earth again by the roadside."

XI

Now that Simon and Matrena understood at last whom it was that they had clothed and fed and taken in, they wept both with fear and with joy. But the angel went on:

"Thus I was left naked and alone in the open fields. Never before had I known human need, never before had I known cold or hunger; yet now I had become a man. I was freezing and hungry, and knew not what to do. Then I saw by the roadside a chapel built for God, and approached God's building, hoping to take refuge there; but it was barred and locked, and I could not enter. Then I sat down behind it, to shield myself from the wind. Evening came, and I felt cold and hungry, and in pain all over. Suddenly I listened. A man was coming along the road, carrying a pair of boots in his hand, and talking to himself. Then for the first time since I became a man I saw a deathlike human face, and that face seemed to me horrible, and I turned from it. But as I did so I heard this man talking to himself concerning how he should protect his body from the winter's cold and feed his wife and children, and I thought to myself: 'Here am I perishing of cold and hunger, while here at the same moment is this man thinking of how he shall clothe his wife and himself in sheepskin and feed himself and his family with bread! Surely I may look for help from him?' The man caught sight of me, knit his brows—becoming still more horrible as he did so—and passed on. I was in despair. Suddenly, however, I heard him returning. I peered forth, and could scarcely recognize him as the same. In his face, before, there had been death, but now the face had come suddenly to life; and in that face I saw God. The man came to me, clothed me, took me away with him, and conducted me to his home. As I entered his house there came out to meet us a woman, and she

began to speak. The woman seemed to me even more dreadful than the man. The breath from her mouth was as that of a corpse, and I was well-nigh choked with the odour of death. She wished to cast me into the cold again, yet I knew that she would die if she did so. Then all at once her husband reminded her of God, and in a moment she became changed; so that when she had given us supper, and was sitting gazing upon me, I gazed at her in return—and, behold! there was no longer death in her face, but life; and in her I recognized God.

"Then I remembered the first word of God—'Thou shalt learn what that is which dwelleth in men.' And I knew that the thing which dwelleth in men is Love, and felt glad that God had seen fit to reveal to me that which He had promised; so that I smiled for the first time. But I had not yet learnt all. I had still to learn what that is which is not given to men, and what that is whereby men live.

"So I came to dwell with you, and had so dwelt for a year, when there entered hither a man to order boots—boots such as might last for a year without treading over or splitting. As I gazed at him, suddenly I saw standing behind his shoulders my comrade the Angel of Death. No one but I saw that Angel, yet I knew him, and knew also that the sun would not have set before the soul of this rich man would be required of him. And I thought to myself: 'Here is this man making provision for a year hence, though knowing not, all the time, that he has not so much as until nightfall to live.' Then I remembered the second word of God—'Thou shalt learn what that is which is not given to men.'

"Already I had learnt what that is which dwelleth in men. Now also I had learnt what that is which is not given to men: for it is not given to men to know what is necessary for their bodies. Then I smiled the second time. I rejoiced that I had seen my comrade angel, and that God had revealed to me His second word.

"Yet I had not learnt all. I had still to learn what that is whereby men live. So I lived on, and waited for the time when God should reveal to me His last word. And during my sixth year with you there came hither a woman with twin girls, and I recognized the little girls, and knew that they had been preserved alive. As I recognized them I thought to myself: 'The mother besought me for her children, and I hearkened to her, thinking that without father or mother the little ones would die: yet this woman, a stranger, has fed and reared them.' And when I saw the woman moved to pity for the children and shedding tears over them I recognized in her the living God, and understood what that is whereby men live. I knew that God had revealed to me His third and last word—and had pardoned me. Then for the third time I smiled."

XII

SUDDENLY the Angel's form became stripped of clothing, and robed wholly in light, so that the eye could not bear to look upon him, while his voice became more resonant, as though it were proceeding, not from his own mouth, but from Heaven itself. And the Angel said:

"Yes, I learnt that every man lives, not by taking thought for himself, but by Love.

"It was not given to the childing woman to know what was needful for the preservation of her children's lives. It was not given to the rich man to know what was needful for his body. Nor is it given unto any man to know whether, before the sun shall have set, it may be boots for his living body or *bosoviki* for his corpse that he shall require.

"When I was a man, my life was preserved to me, not by taking thought for myself, but by the love which dwelt in a passer-by and his wife, so that they could feel for me pity and affection. Again, the two orphans were preserved alive, not by any thought which

was taken for them, but by the love which dwelt in the heart of a strange woman, so that she could feel for them pity and affection. For, indeed, all men live, not by the thought which they may take for themselves, but by the love which dwells in all mankind.

"I had known before that God gave life to men, and that He would have them live; but now I understood another thing.

"I understood that God would not have men live apart from one another—wherefore He had not revealed to them what was needful for each one: but that He would have them live in unity—wherefore He had revealed to them only what was needful both for themselves and for their fellows *together*.

"Yes, at last I understood that men only *appear* to live by taking thought for themselves, but that in reality they live by Love alone. He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him: for God is love."

. . . . . .

Then the Angel sang a hymn of praise to God, and the hut trembled at the sound of his voice, while the roof parted in the middle, and a pillar of fire shot up from earth to Heaven. Simon and his wife and children fell down upon their faces in adoration, and as they did so wings burst forth from the Angel's back, and he soared away into the sky.

. . . . . .

When Simon opened his eyes again, the hut was as it had been before, and there was no one there but his own household.

ELIAS

In the Province of Oufa there lived a Bashkir named Elias. His father died a year after he had procured his son a wife, and left him a poor man. At that time Elias's property consisted only of seven mares, two cows, and twenty sheep, but now that he had become master he began to better himself. He and his wife worked hard from morning till night—rising earlier, and resting later, than any of their neighbours, and growing richer each year. For thirty-five years Elias lived this life of toil, and amassed a considerable fortune.

That fortune consisted of two hundred horses, a hundred and fifty head of cattle, and twelve hundred sheep. He had men to look after the droves of horses and the herds of cattle and sheep, and women to milk the mares and cows and to make *kumiss*,[1] butter, and cheese. Indeed, he had much of everything, and everyone in the countryside envied him his lot. People said: "Elias must be a happy man. He has everything in abundance, and has no reason to desire death." The gentry sought his acquaintance, and cultivated it when made. Guests came from long distances to visit him, and each and all he received and entertained with food and drink. For everyone who arrived he would have *kumiss*, tea, sherbet, and mutton prepared. No sooner had a guest appeared than a sheep or two would be killed, or, if the guests were many, a mare.

The children of Elias numbered two sons and a daughter, all of whom he duly married off. In the days of his poverty his sons had worked with him, and themselves tended the droves and herds; but when they became rich, they began to indulge in dissipation, and one of them, in particular, to drink to excess. Eventually the eldest of the two was killed in a brawl,

[1] A liquor made from mare's milk.

and the other one (who had fallen under the thumb of an upstart wife) became disobedient to his father, and was turned out in consequence.

Elias turned him out, but at the same time allotted him a house and cattle, so that his own wealth became diminished in proportion.

Soon afterwards his sheep became infected with disease, and numbers of them died. Next, there came a year of drought, when no hay grew, so that many cattle were starved during the following winter. Then the Khirgizes came and stole the best of his horses, and his property became diminished yet further. Lower and lower he sank, and his perseverance also; so that, by the time he had reached his seventieth year, he had been reduced to selling his sheepskin coats, his carpets, saddles, tilt-carts, and, eventually, his last remaining cattle, and had arrived at absolute penury. Then, when he saw that he had nothing left, he and his wife went to spend their declining years among strangers. All the property now left to him consisted of the clothes on his body (a sheepskin coat, a cap, a pair of breeches, and boots) and his wife, Sham Shemagi, who was as old as himself. The son whom he had turned out had gone to a distant land, and his daughter was dead; so that there was no one left to help the old people.

Yet a former neighbour of theirs, named Muhamed-shah, felt sorry for them. He was neither rich nor poor, but lived plainly and was a respectable man. Remembering the days when he had partaken of bread and salt in the house of Elias, he felt his heart smite him, and said: "Come and live with me, Elias, and bring the old woman with you. In the summer you can do such work for me in the melon fields as you feel fit for, and in the winter you can tend my cattle, while Sham Shemagi can milk the mares and make *kumiss*. I will feed and clothe you both, and if you should need anything else you will merely have to tell me, and I will give it you." Elias thanked his good neighbour, and went with his old wife to live

in the service of Muhamedshah. At first it grieved them to do so, but in time they got used to it, and settled down to live there and to work as far as their strength permitted.

It suited their master to have them in his service, since the old people had been in authority themselves, and so knew how to do things. Moreover, they were never lazy, but worked the best they knew. Yet Muhamedshah used to feel sorry to see people formerly so high in the world now reduced to such a pass.

It happened once that some of Muhamedshah's relations came to visit him—people who lived in a distant spot—and with them a certain mullah.[1] Muhamedshah bid Elias catch and kill a sheep; which, duly slaughtered and skinned, Elias cooked, and sent in to dinner. The guests ate of the mutton, drank tea and passed on to *kumiss*. While they were sitting with their host on carpets and padded cushions as they drank cups of *kumiss* and conversed together, Elias happened to pass the door in the course of his duties. Muhamedshah saw him, and said to one of the guests: "Did you see that old man who passed the door just now?" "Yes," replied the guest; "but what of him?" "Well, this—that his name is Elias, and that once upon a time he was our richest man about here. Perhaps you have heard of him?" "Heard of him?" exclaimed the guest. "Yes, certainly I have, but this is the first time I have ever seen him, although his fame used to be widespread." "Well, now the old man has nothing at all, but I keep him on as my servant, and his old wife lives with him, and milks the cows."

The guest clicked his tongue, shook his head, and evinced much surprise. Then he said: "Verily fortune is like a wheel turning. It lifts up one man, and sets down another. Does the old man grieve about his plight?" "Who knows? He lives quietly and peaceably, and does his work well." "Might I, then, speak to him?" inquired the guest. "I should

[1] Mahomedan priest.

like to ask him about his former life." "Certainly," replied the host, and called behind the door-curtain: "*Babai!*" (which means "*Diediushka*"[1] in the Bashkir language), "come in and have some *kumiss*, and call your wife also." So Elias and his wife entered, and, having greeted the guests and their master, the old man said a grace and knelt down by the door, while his wife went behind the curtain where her mistress was sitting, and seated herself beside her.

Elias was offered a cup of *kumiss*, whereupon he wished the guests and his master good health, bowed to them, drank a little of the *kumiss*, and set the cup down.

"Old man," said the guest, "tell me whether it grieves you—now as you look upon us—to remember your former fortunes and your present life of misery?"

Elias smiled and answered: "If I were to speak to you of our happiness or misery you might not believe me. You should rather ask my wife. She has both a woman's heart and a woman's tongue, and will tell you the whole truth about that matter."

Then the guest called to the old woman behind the curtain: "Tell me, old woman, what you think concerning your former happiness and your present misery."

And Sham Shemagi answered from behind the curtain: "This is what I think concerning them. I lived with my husband for fifty years—seeking happiness, and never finding it; but now, although we live as servants, and this is only the second year since we were left destitute, we have found true happiness, and desire no other."

Both the guests and their host were surprised at this—the latter, indeed, so much so that he rose to his feet to draw aside the curtain and look at the old woman. There she stood—her hands folded in front of her, and a smile upon her face, as she gazed at her old husband and he smiled back at her in return. Then she went on: "I am but telling you the truth,

[1] Good little grandfather.

not jesting. For half a century we sought happiness, and never found it so long as we were rich; yet now that we have nothing—now that we have come to live among humble folk—we have found such happiness as could never be exceeded."

"Wherein, then, does your happiness lie?" asked the guest.

"In this—that so long as we were rich I and my husband never knew an hour's peace in which we could either talk to one another, or think about our souls, or pray to God. We had too many cares for that. If guests were with us we were fully occupied in thinking how to entertain them and what to give them so that they would not scorn us. Moreover, when guests had arrived we had their servants to look to—to see that they should not compare their board and lodging with that given them elsewhere, and compare it to our disadvantage, while at the same time we had to watch that they did not consume our entire substance—an act of sin on our part. Then again, there would be constant worries lest a wolf should kill one of our foals or calves, or thieves drive off the horses. If we lay down to sleep we could not do so for thinking that the ewes might overlay their lambs. Half the night we would be up and doing, and then, when we retired to rest once more, we would find ourselves beset with fresh anxieties as to how to procure fodder for the winter, and so on. Moreover, my husband and I could never agree together. He would say that a thing must be done in *this* way, and I that it must be done in *that*; and so we would begin to quarrel, and thus commit another act of sin. The life led us only from worry to worry, from sin to sin, but never to happiness."

"But how is it now?" asked the guest.

"Now," replied the old woman, "when I and my husband rise in the morning, we always greet each other in love and harmony. We quarrel over nothing, and are anxious about nothing. Our only care is how best to serve the master. We work according to our

strength, and with a good will, so that the master shall suffer no loss, but on the contrary acquire gain. Then, when we come in, we find dinner, supper, and *kumiss* ready for us. Whenever it is cold we have fuel[1] to warm us and sheepskin coats to wear. Moreover, we have time to talk to one another, to think about our souls, and to pray to God. For fifty years we sought happiness—but only now have we found it."

The guests burst out laughing, but Elias cried:

"Do not laugh, good sirs. This is no jest, but human life. Once I and my wife were gross of heart and wept because we had lost our riches, but now God has revealed unto us the truth, and we reveal it unto you again—not for our own diversion, but for your good."

To which the mullah added: "That is a wise saying, and Elias has spoken the truth—a truth which is found set down in Holy Writ."

Then the guests ceased to make merry, and became thoughtful.

[1] In this case made of dried cow-dung.

CHILDREN MAY BE WISER THAN THEIR ELDERS

Holy Week fell early. Sledging was only just over, and snow still lay in the shelter of the courtyards, or, melting, ran in rivulets down the village street. A large pool had oozed from beneath the slush, and collected in an alley-way between two yards. From those yards there hied them to this pool a couple of little girls—an elder and a younger. Their mothers had just dressed them in brand-new frocks (the younger one in a blue frock, and the elder in a yellow, embroidered one), and tied red handkerchiefs over their heads. The pair issued forth after dinner, and betook them to the side of the pool, where they first of all showed each other their fine clothes, and then fell to playing. They thought they would like to wade across the pool, and accordingly the younger one started to do so, shoes and all. The elder one, however, cried: "Don't go in like that, Malasha, or your mother will scold you. Take off your shoes first, and I will do the same." So they took off their shoes, tucked up their frocks, and waded across the pool from opposite sides. Malasha went in over her ankles, and called out: "It is so deep, Akulka dear. I am afraid." "No, no," replied the other, "it can't get any deeper. Come straight across to me." So they drew nearer. Then Akulka said: "Mind, Malasha, and don't splash me. Go gently." The words were hardly out of her mouth when Malasha gave a stamp with her foot, and splashed the water straight onto Akulka's frock. It was splashed all over, and so were her eyes and nose. When Akulka saw the stains on her frock she was very angry with Malasha, scolded her furiously, and ran towards her to give her a slap. Malasha, however, was frightened when she saw the damage she had done, and, jumping out of the pool, ran home. Now, Akulka's mother

happened to pass that way, and saw her daughter with her frock all splashed and her petticoat muddied over. "How did you manage to get so dirty, you bad girl?" she asked. "Malasha splashed me. She did it on purpose," answered her little daughter. So Akulka's mother caught Malasha, and spanked her soundly, so that the street rang with her weeping. That brought her mother out. "What are you beating my child for?" she cried angrily to her neighbour, and the pair began bandying words. The peasants came out of their huts, and a small crowd collected in the street. Every one shouted, but no one listened, as the crowd wrangled and wrangled. At last one peasant pushed against another one, and a fight was imminent, when an old woman—Akulka's grandmother—appeared on the scene. Running into the midst of the peasants, she cried protestingly: "Now then, good people! Is this the way in which this Holy Week should be spent? You ought all of you to be giving thanks to God, and not conspiring to sin like this." But the peasants would not listen to her, and almost pushed her off her legs. Indeed, she would never have dissuaded the two peasants from fighting but for Malasha and Akulka themselves. While the women had been quarrelling, Akulka had gone in and wiped her frock, and then came out again to the pool in the alley-way. There she picked up a small stone, and began to dig out the earth by the side of the pool. While thus engaged, she was joined by Malasha, who began to help her to dig out a little channel with a chip of wood. The peasants were just starting to fight, when the water escaped out of the pool through the little channel dug by the children, and ran out into the street to the spot where the old woman was trying to separate the two peasants. The little girls came darting out of the alley-way, one on each side of the tiny stream. "Stop it, Malasha! Stop it!" cried Akulka. Malasha also was trying to say something, but could not speak for laughter.

Thus the two little girls came running along, laugh-

ing at the chip of wood as it bobbed about in the rivulet—and ran straight into the midst of the peasants. As soon as the old woman saw them she cried to the two disputants: "Have some respect for God! Here are you gathered together to fight about these same little girls, yet they themselves have long ago forgotten the whole matter, and are playing together again in peace and goodwill. They are wiser than you."

The two disputants looked at the little girls, and felt ashamed of themselves, while the other peasants burst out laughing at their own folly, and dispersed to their huts.

"If ye do not become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

LABOUR, DEATH, AND DISEASE

AMONG the Patagonians there is current the following tradition.

At first (it runs God created men so that they had no need to work, nor to provide themselves with shelter, clothing, or food. Every man lived to be a hundred exactly, and was immune from disease.

Time passed on, and when God looked down to see how mankind was faring, He found that, instead of rejoicing in their lot, men were thinking only of themselves, quarrelling with each other, and ordering their existence in such a way that life was to them rather a curse than a blessing.

Then God said to Himself: "This comes of their living apart from one another, each man for himself." So, to put an end to that, He made it impossible for men to live without labour. If they would avoid suffering from cold and hunger they must build themselves dwellings, till the ground, and rear flocks and herds.

"Labour will unite them," thought God to Himself. "No man can hew and draw wood, build dwellings, forge implements, sow, reap, spin, weave, or make clothing, alone. Therefore men will be forced to recognize that the more they associate in labour, the more they will produce, and the more comfortable will their life be. This cannot but unite them."

Time passed on, and once more God looked down to see how mankind was faring, and whether it were now rejoicing in its lot. Yet He found men living even worse than before. True, they worked together (they could not do otherwise), but not *all* together, for they had divided themselves up into groups, each of which strove to depute its labour to another, as well as hindered its fellows, and wasted both time

and energy in quarrelling. This was bad for all of them.

Seeing this, God decided to make men ignorant of the precise moment of their death, as well as liable to die at any age, instead of at a hundred exactly. This expedient He justified to Himself thus:

"When men know that they may die at any moment they will be too careful of their lives (hanging, as those lives will be, by a single thread) to rage against one another and so put in jeopardy those hours of life which may be allotted them."

Yet things turned out quite otherwise. When God looked down once more to see how mankind was faring He found that the life of men had in no way altered for the better.

Some men were stronger than others, and so were able to avail themselves of the fact that death might come at any moment to intimidate those weaker than themselves, by killing a certain proportion of them and threatening the rest. Thus an order of life had arisen in which a certain number of strong men and their followers did no work at all, but consumed themselves in idleness, while the weaker were forced to work beyond their strength, and deteriorated for want of rest. Each of these two classes feared and detested the other, and the life of mankind had become more unhappy than ever.

Seeing how things stood, God determined to make use of the last remedy of all. That is to say, He sent every kind of disease among men; for He thought that when they had become subject to disease they would realize that the healthy man must pity and assist the sick, so that if he himself fell ill, he too might receive assistance from the healthy.

Then for a time God left mankind alone; but when He looked down once more to see how things were getting on, He found that from the very moment when men had been made subject to disease their life had been growing steadily worse. The diseases which God had thought would unite them had only

served to sunder them more. Those who had been used to compelling others to work for them now compelled them also to wait upon them when sick, although they themselves took no thought whatever for other sufferers. At the same time, those who were thus compelled not only to work for others, but also to wait upon them when sick, were so overburdened with labour that they had no opportunity to attend to their own sick folk, and so had to leave them helpless. Moreover, some diseases were recognized to be infectious, so that, dreading the infection, many men would neither go near the sufferers nor consort with those who had come in contact with them.

Then God said to Himself:

"Since by these means I have failed to bring men to understand wherein lies their true happiness, I will leave them to arrive at that result through their tribulations."

Thenceforth, therefore, God left mankind alone.

Abandoned to their own devices, men lived for a long time without understanding the means by which it was both possible and right for them to live happily. But at last some of them began to realize that labour need not of necessity mean, for some a means of subjecting their fellows, and for others a kind of penal servitude, but rather a source of joy, uniting all men in one. Likewise, they realized that, in face of that death which threatened every man hourly, the only prudent course for them was to make up their minds to spend in concord and love such years, months, days, hours, or minutes as might be ordained them. Lastly, they realized, not only that disease should not be a source of division among men but that, on the contrary, it should be a source of loving good-fellowship.

THE GRAIN THAT WAS LIKE AN EGG

ONCE upon a time some children found, in a ravine, a little round something that was like an egg; but it also had a groove down the middle, and so was like a grain of corn. A passer-by saw this something in the children's hands, and bought it off them for a *piatak*.[1] Then he took it away to town and sold it to the Tsar as a curiosity.

The Tsar sent for his wise men, and commanded them to examine the little round something and to say if it was an egg or a grain of corn. The wise men pondered and pondered, but could not solve the problem.

So the little round something was left lying on a window-sill, and a hen flew in, pecked at the little round something, and pecked a hole in it; so that everyone could now see that it was a grain of corn. Wherefore the wise men hastened to return and tell the Tsar that the little round something was nothing else than a grain of rye.

The Tsar was astonished, and commanded the wise men to ascertain where and when this grain was grown. So the wise men pondered and pondered, and searched their books, but could discover nothing. They returned to the Tsar, therefore, and said: "We cannot resolve those two questions, for we find nothing written in our books about them. But let your Imperial Majesty cause inquiry to be made among the peasantry, lest haply any one of them has ever heard from his elders where and when this grain was sown."

So the Tsar sent and commanded a very ancient elder of the peasantry to be brought to him. Such a one was searched for, and conducted to the Tsar's presence. The old man was livid and toothless, and walked with difficulty on crutches.

[1] A copper coin worth five copecks (1¼d.).

The Tsar showed him the grain, which was unlike anything that the old man had ever seen before. Indeed, he could hardly see it now, but half-examined it with his eyes, half-felt it with his hands. Then the Tsar asked him:

"Do you know, good grandfather, where this grain was grown? Did you yourself ever sow similar grain in your field, or did you ever in your time buy similar grain?"

The old man was deaf, and heard and understood only with great difficulty, so that he was slow in answering.

"No," he said at last, "it never befell me to sow such grain in my field, nor to reap such grain, nor to buy it. When we bought corn it was all of fine, small grain. But," he continued, "you would do well to ask my father. He may have heard where such a grain as this one was grown."

So the Tsar sent the old man to fetch his father, and commanded the latter to be brought to him. The father of the old man was duly found and conducted to the presence, and he entered it hobbling on one crutch only. The Tsar showed him the grain, and, as the old man still had the use of his eyes, he was able to see it quite clearly. Then the Tsar asked him:

"Do you know, my good old man, where such a grain was grown? Did you ever yourself sow similar grain in your field? Or did you ever in your time buy similar grain from anywhere?"

The old man was a little hard of hearing, yet he could hear much better than his son.

"No," he said, "it never befell me to sow or to reap such grain; no, nor yet to buy it, since in my time money had not begun to be used in trade. Everyone grew his own bread, and, as regarded other needs, one shared with another. I do not know where such a grain as this one can have been grown, for, although our grain was larger than grain is now and gave more flour, I have never before seen such a grain. But I

have heard my father say that in his time better corn was reaped than in mine, and that it was larger and yielded more flour. You would do well to send and ask him."

So the Tsar sent for the father of this old man, and the father was found and conducted to the presence. He entered it without crutches at all—walking easily, in fact—while his eyes were still bright and he spoke distinctly. The Tsar showed him the grain, and the old man looked at it and turned it over and over.

"Ah," he said, "but it is many a long day since I have seen a grain of olden times like this one!" Then he nibbled the grain and chewed a morsel of it. 'It is the same!" he exclaimed.

"Tell me, then, grandfather," said the Tsar, "where and when such grain as this was grown? Did you yourself ever sow such grain in your field? Or did you ever in your time buy it anywhere of others?"

Then the old man replied:

"In my time such grain as this was reaped everywhere. It was on such grain that I myself lived and supported others. Such grain have I both sowed and reaped and ground."

And the Tsar asked him again:

"Tell me, good grandfather, was it ever your custom to *buy* such grain anywhere, or always to sow it yourself in your own field?"

The old man smiled.

"In my time," he said, "no one would ever have thought of committing so great a sin as to buy or to sell grain. We knew nothing of money. Each man had as much grain as he wanted."

Then the Tsar asked him again:

"Tell me, good grandfather, where it was that you sowed such grain—where, indeed, your field was?"

And the old man replied:

"My field was God's earth. Where I ploughed, that was my field. The earth was free, and no man

called it his own. All that he called his own was the labour of his own hands."

"Tell me now," said the Tsar, "two other things: firstly, why it is that such grain once grew, but grows not now; and secondly, why it is that your grandson walked on two crutches, and your son on one, while you yourself walk easily without any at all, and have, moreover, your eyes still bright and your teeth still strong and your speech still clear and kindly. Tell me the reason for these two things."

Then answered the old man:

"The reason for those two things is that men have ceased to live by their labour alone, and have begun to hanker after their neighbours' goods. In the olden days they lived not so. In the olden days they lived according to God's word. They were masters of their own, and coveted not what belonged to another."

WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

In a certain town there lived a shoemaker named Martin Avdeitch. He lived in a basement room which possessed but one window. This window looked onto the street, and through it a glimpse could be caught of the passers-by. It is true that only their legs could be seen, but that did not matter, as Martin could recognize people by their boots alone. He had lived here for a long time, and so had many acquaintances. There were very few pairs of boots in the neighbourhood which had not passed through his hands at least once, if not twice. Some he had resoled, others he had fitted with side-pieces, others, again, he had resewn where they were split, or provided with new toe-caps. Yes, he often saw his handiwork through that window. He was given plenty of custom, for his work lasted well, his materials were good, his prices moderate, and his word to be depended on. If he could do a job by a given time it should be done; but if not, he would warn you beforehand rather than disappoint you. Everyone knew Avdeitch, and no one ever transferred his custom from him. He had always been an upright man, but with the approach of old age he had begun more than ever to think of his soul, and to draw nearer to God.

His wife had died while he was still an apprentice, leaving behind her a little boy of three. This was their only child, indeed, for the two elder ones had died previously. At first Martin thought of placing the little fellow with a sister of his in the country, but changed his mind, thinking: "My Kapitoshka would not like to grow up in a strange family, so I will keep him by me." Then Avdeitch finished his apprenticeship, and went to live in lodgings with his little boy. But God had not seen fit to give Avdeitch happiness in his children. The little boy was just

growing up and beginning to help his father and to be a pleasure to him, when he fell ill, was put to bed, and died after a week's fever.

Martin buried the little fellow and was inconsolable. Indeed, he was so inconsolable that he began to murmur against God. His life seemed so empty that more than once he prayed for death and reproached the Almighty for taking away his only beloved son instead of himself, the old man. At last he ceased altogether to go to church.

Then one day there came to see him an ancient peasant-pilgrim—one who was now in the eighth year of his pilgrimage. To him Avdeitch talked, and then went on to complain of his great sorrow.

"I no longer wish to be a God-fearing man," he said. "I only wish to die. That is all I ask of God. I am a lonely, hopeless man."

"You should not speak like that, Martin," replied the old pilgrim. "It is not for us to judge the acts of God. We must rely, not upon our own understanding, but upon the Divine wisdom. God saw fit that your son should die and that you should live. Therefore it must be better so. If you despair, it is because you have wished to live too much for your own pleasure."

"For what, then, should I live?" asked Martin.

"For God alone," replied the old man. "It is He who gave you life, and therefore it is He for whom you should live. When you come to live for Him you will cease to grieve, and your trials will become easy to bear."

Martin was silent. Then he spoke again.

"But how am I to live for God?" he asked.

"Christ has shown us the way," answered the old man. "Can you read? If so, buy a Testament and study it. You will learn there how to live for God. Yes, it is all shown you there."

These words sank into Avdeitch's soul. He went out the same day, bought a large-print copy of the New Testament, and set himself to read it.

At the beginning Avdeitch had meant only to read on festival days, but when he once began his reading he found it so comforting to the soul that he came never to let a day pass without doing so. On the second occasion he became so engrossed that all the kerosene was burnt away in the lamp before he could tear himself away from the book.

Thus he came to read it every evening, and, the more he read, the more clearly did he understand what God required of him, and in what way he could live for God; so that his heart grew ever lighter and lighter. Once upon a time, whenever he had lain down to sleep, he had been used to moan and sigh as he thought of his little Kapitoshka; but now he only said—"Glory to Thee, O Lord! Glory to Thee! Thy will be done!"

From that time onwards Avdeitch's life became completely changed. Once he had been used to go out on festival days and drink tea in a tavern, and had not denied himself even an occasional glass of *vodka*. This he had done in the company of a boon companion, and, although no drunkard, would frequently leave the tavern in an excited state and talk much nonsense as he shouted and disputed with this friend of his. But now he had turned his back on all this, and his life had become quiet and joyous. Early in the morning he would sit down to his work, and labour through his appointed hours. Then he would take the lamp down from a shelf, light it, and sit down to read. And the more he read, the more he understood, and the clearer and happier he grew at heart.

It happened once that Martin had been reading late. He had been reading those verses in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St Luke which run:

"And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would

that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

Then, further on, he had read those verses where the Lord says:

"And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

Avdeitch read these words, and felt greatly cheered in soul. He took off his spectacles, laid them on the book, leaned his elbows upon the table, and gave himself up to meditation. He set himself to measure his own life by those words, and thought to himself:

"Is my house founded upon a rock or upon sand? It is well if it be upon a rock. Yet it seems so easy to me as I sit here alone. I may so easily come to think that I have done all that the Lord has commanded me, and grow careless and—sin again. Yet I will keep on striving, for it is goodly so to do. Help Thou me, O Lord."

Thus he kept on meditating, though conscious that it was time for bed; yet he was loathe to tear himself away from the book. He began to read the seventh chapter of St Luke, and read on about the centurion, the widow's son, and the answer given to John's disciples; until in time he came to the passage where the rich Pharisee invited Jesus to his house, and the woman washed the Lord's feet with her tears and He justified her. So he came to the forty-fourth verse and read:

"And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine

house, and thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment."

He read these verses and thought·

"'Thou gavest Me no water for My feet' . . 'Thou gavest Me no kiss' . . . 'My head with oil thou didst not anoint' . . ."—and once again he took off his spectacles, laid them on the book, and became lost in meditation.

"I am even as that Pharisee," he thought to himself. "I drink tea and think only of my own needs. Yes, I think only of having plenty to eat and drink, of being warm and clean—but never of entertaining a guest. And Simon too was mindful only of himself, although the guest who had come to visit him was—who? Why, even the Lord Himself! If, then, He should come to visit *me*, should I receive Him any better?"—and, leaning forward upon his elbows, he was asleep almost before he was aware of it.

"Martin!" someone seemed to breathe in his ear.

He started from his sleep.

"Who is there?" he said. He turned and looked towards the door, but could see no one. Again he bent forward over the table. Then suddenly he heard the words:

"Martin, Martin! Look thou into the street tomorrow, for I am coming to visit thee."

Martin roused himself, got up from the chair, and rubbed his eyes. He did not know whether it was dreaming or awake that he had heard these words, but he turned out the lamp and went to bed.

The next morning Aydeitch rose before daylight and said his prayers. Then he made up the stove, got ready some cabbage soup and porridge, lighted the *samovar*, slung his leather apron about him, and sat down to his work in the window. He sat and

worked hard, yet all the time his thoughts were centred upon last night. He was in two ideas about the vision. At one moment he would think that it must have been his fancy, while the next moment he would find himself convinced that he had really heard the voice. "Yes, it must have been so," he concluded.

As Martin sat thus by the window he kept looking out of it as much as working. Whenever a pair of boots passed with which he was acquainted he would bend down to glance upwards through the window and see their owner's face as well. The doorkeeper passed in new felt boots, and then a water-carrier. Next, an old soldier, a veteran of Nicholas' army, in old, patched boots, and carrying a shovel in his hands, halted close by the window. Avdeitch knew him by his boots. His name was Stepanitch, and he was kept by a neighbouring tradesman out of charity, his duties being to help the doorkeeper. He began to clear away the snow from in front of Avdeitch's window, while the shoemaker looked at him and then resumed his work.

"I think I must be getting into my dotage," thought Avdeitch with a smile. "Just because Stepanitch begins clearing away the snow I at once jump to the conclusion that Christ is about to visit me. Yes, I am growing foolish now, old greybeard that I am."

Yet he had hardly made a dozen stitches before he was craning his neck again to look out of the window. He could see that Stepanitch had placed his shovel against the wall, and was resting and trying to warm himself a little.

"He is evidently an old man now and broken," thought Avdeitch to himself. "He is not strong enough to clear away snow. Would he like some tea, I wonder? That reminds me that the *samovar* must be ready now."

He made fast his awl in his work and got up. Placing the *samovar* on the table, he brewed the tea, and then tapped with his finger on the window-pane.

Stepanitch turned round and approached. Avdeitch beckoned to him, and then went to open the door.

"Come in and warm yourself," he said. "You must be frozen."

"Christ requite you!" answered Stepanitch. "Yes, my bones are almost cracking."

He came in, shook the snow off himself, and, though tottering on his feet, took pains to wipe them carefully, that he might not dirty the floor.

"Nay, do not trouble about that," said Avdeitch. "I will wipe your boots myself. It is part of my business in this trade. Come you here and sit down, and we will empty this tea-pot together."

He poured out two tumblerfuls, and offered one to his guest; after which he emptied his own into the saucer, and blew upon it to cool it. Stepanitch drank his tumblerful, turned the glass upside down, placed his crust upon it, and thanked his host kindly. But it was plain that he wanted another one.

"You must drink some more," said Avdeitch, and refilled his guest's tumbler and his own. Yet, in spite of himself, he had no sooner drunk his tea than he found himself looking out into the street again.

"Are you expecting anyone?" asked his guest.

"Am—am I expecting anyone? Well, to tell the truth, yes. That is to say, I am, and I am not. The fact is that some words have got fixed in my memory. Whether it was a vision or not I cannot tell, but at all events, my old friend, I was reading in the Gospels last night about Our Little Father Christ, and how He walked this earth and suffered. You have heard of Him, have you not?"

"Yes, yes, I have heard of Him," answered Stepanitch; "but we are ignorant folk and do not know our letters."

"Well, I was reading of how He walked this earth, and how He went to visit a Pharisee, and yet received no welcome from him at the door. All this I read last night, my friend, and then fell to thinking about it—to thinking how some day I too might fail to pay

Our Little Father Christ due honour. 'Suppose,' I thought to myself, 'He came to me or to anyone like me? Should we, like the great lord Simon, not know how to receive Him and not go out to meet Him?' Thus I thought, and fell asleep where I sat. Then as I sat sleeping there I heard someone call my name; and as I raised myself the voice went on (as though it were the voice of someone whispering in my ear): 'Watch thou for me to-morrow, for I am coming to visit thee.' It said that twice. And so those words have got into my head, and, foolish though I know it to be, I keep expecting *Him*—the Little Father—every moment."

Stepanitch nodded and said nothing, but emptied his glass and laid it aside. Nevertheless Avdeitch took and refilled it.

"Drink it up; it will do you good," he said. "Do you know," he went on, "I often call to mind how, when Our Little Father walked this earth, there was never a man, however humble, whom He despised, and how it was chiefly among the common people that He dwelt. It was always with *them* that He walked; it was from among *them*—from among such men as you and I—from among sinners and working folk—that He chose His disciples. 'Whosoever,' He said, 'shall exalt himself, the same shall be abased; and whosoever shall abase himself, the same shall be exalted.' 'You,' He said again, 'call me Lord; yet will I wash your feet.' 'Whosoever,' He said, 'would be chief among you, let him be the servant of all. Because,' He said, 'blessed are the lowly, the peacemakers, the merciful, and the charitable.'"

Stepanitch had forgotten all about his tea. He was an old man, and his tears came easily. He sat and listened, with the tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Oh, but you must drink your tea," said Avdeitch; yet Stepanitch only crossed himself and said the thanksgiving, after which he pushed his glass away and rose.

"I thank you, Martin Avdeitch," he said. "You have taken me in, and fed both soul and body."

"Nay, but I beg of you to come again," replied Avdeitch. "I am only too glad of a guest."

So Stepanitch departed, while Martin poured out the last of the tea and drank it. Then he cleaned the crockery, and sat down again to his work by the window—to the stitching of a back-piece. He stitched away, yet kept on looking through the window—looking for Christ, as it were—and ever thinking of Christ and His works. Indeed, Christ's many sayings were never absent from Avdeitch's mind.

Two soldiers passed the window, the one in military boots, and the other in civilian. Next, there came a neighbouring householder, in polished goloshes; then a baker with a basket. All of them passed on. Presently a woman in woollen stockings and rough country shoes approached the window, and halted near the buttress outside it. Avdeitch peered up at her from under the lintel of his window, and could see that she was a plain-looking, poorly-dressed woman and had a child in her arms. It was in order to muffle the child up more closely—little though she had to do it with!—that she had stopped near the buttress and was now standing there with her back to the wind. Her clothing was ragged and fit only for summer, and even from behind his window-panes Avdeitch could hear the child crying miserably and its mother vainly trying to soothe it. Avdeitch rose, went to the door, climbed the steps, and cried out: "My good woman, my good woman!"

She heard him and turned round.

"Why need you stand there in the cold with your baby?" he went on. "Come into my room, where it is warm, and where you will be able to wrap the baby up more comfortably than you can do here. Yes, come in with you."

The woman was surprised to see an old man in a leather apron and with spectacles upon his nose

calling out to her, yet she followed him down the steps, and they entered his room. The old man led her to the bedstead.

"Sit you down here, my good woman," he said. "You will be near the stove, and can warm yourself and feed your baby."

"Ah, but I have no milk left in my breast," she replied. "I have had nothing to eat this morning." Nevertheless she put the child to suck.

Avdeitch nodded his head approvingly, went to the table for some bread and a basin, and opened the stove door. From the stove he took and poured some soup into the basin, and drew out also a bowl of porridge. The latter, however, was not yet boiling, so he set out only the soup, after first laying the table with a cloth.

"Sit down and eat, my good woman," he said, "while I hold your baby. I have had little ones of my own, and know how to nurse them."

The woman crossed herself and sat down, while Avdeitch seated himself upon the bedstead with the baby. He smacked his lips at it once or twice, but made a poor show of it, for he had no teeth left. Consequently the baby went on crying. Then he bethought him of his finger, which he wriggled to and fro towards the baby's mouth and back again—without, however, actually touching the little one's lips, since the finger was blackened with work and sticky with shoemaker's wax. The baby contemplated the finger and grew quiet—then actually smiled. Avdeitch was delighted. Meanwhile the woman had been eating her meal, and now she told him, unasked, who she was and whither she was going.

"I am a soldier's wife," she said, "but my husband was sent to a distant station eight months ago, and I have heard nothing of him since. At first I got a place as cook, but when the baby came they said they could not do with it and dismissed me. That was three months ago, and I have got nothing since, and have spent all my savings. I tried to get taken

as a wet nurse, but no one would have me, for they said I was too thin. I have just been to see a tradesman's wife where our grandmother is in service. She had promised to take me on, and I quite thought that she would, but when I arrived to-day she told me to come again next week. She lives a long way from here, and I am quite worn out and have tired my baby for nothing. Thank Heaven, however, my landlady is good to me, and gives me shelter for Christ's sake. Otherwise I should not have known how to bear it all."

Avdeitch sighed and said: "But have you nothing warm to wear?"

"Ah, sir," replied the woman, "although it is the time for warm clothes I had to pawn my last shawl yesterday for two *grivenki*." [1]

Then the woman returned to the bedstead to take her baby, while Avdeitch rose and went to a cupboard. There he rummaged about, and presently returned with an old jacket.

"Here," he said. "It is a poor old thing, but it will serve to cover you."

The woman looked at the jacket, and then at the old man. Then she took the jacket and burst into tears. Avdeitch turned away, and went creeping under the bedstead, whence he extracted a box and pretended to rummage about in it for a few moments; after which he sat down again before the woman.

Then the woman said to him: "I thank you in Christ's name, good grandfather. Surely it was He Himself who sent me to your window. Otherwise I should have seen my baby perish with the cold. When I first came out the day was warm, but now it has begun to freeze. But He, Our Little Father, had placed you in your window, that you might see me in my bitter plight and have compassion upon me."

Avdeitch smiled and said: "He did indeed place me there: yet, my poor woman, it was for a special purpose that I was looking out."

[1] The grivenka = 10 copecks = 2½d.

Then he told his guest, the soldier's wife, of his vision, and how he had heard a voice foretelling that to-day the Lord Himself would come to visit him.

"That may very well be," said the woman as she rose, took the jacket, and wrapped her baby in it. Then she saluted him once more and thanked him.

"Also, take this in Christ's name," said Avdeitch, and gave her a two-*grivenka* piece with which to buy herself a shawl. The woman crossed herself, and he likewise. Then he led her to the door and dismissed her.

When she had gone Avdeitch ate a little soup, washed up the crockery again, and resumed his work. All the time, though, he kept his eye upon the window, and as soon as ever a shadow fell across it he would look up to see who was passing. Acquaintances of his came past, and people whom he did not know, yet never anyone very particular.

Then suddenly he saw something. Opposite his window there had stopped an old pedlar-woman, with a basket of apples. Only a few of the apples, however, remained, so that it was clear that she was almost sold out. Over her shoulder was slung a sack of shavings, which she must have gathered near some new building as she was going home. Apparently, her shoulder had begun to ache under their weight, and she therefore wished to shift them to the other one. To do this, she balanced her basket of apples on the top of a post, lowered the sack to the pavement, and began shaking up its contents. As she was doing this, a boy in a ragged cap appeared from somewhere, seized an apple from the basket, and tried to make off. But the old woman, who had been on her guard, managed to turn and seize the boy by the sleeve, and although he struggled and tried to break away, she clung to him with both hands, snatched his cap off, and finally grasped him by the hair. Thereupon the youngster began to shout and abuse his captor. Avdeitch did not stop to make

fast his awl, but threw his work down upon the floor, ran to the door, and went stumbling up the steps—losing his spectacles as he did so. Out into the street he ran, where the old woman was still clutching the boy by the hair and threatening to take him to the police, while the boy, for his part, was struggling in the endeavour to free himself.

"I never took it," he was saying. "What are you beating me for? Let me go."

Avdeitch tried to part them as he took the boy by the hand and said:

"Let him go, my good woman. Pardon him for Christ's sake."

"Yes, I will pardon him," she retorted, "but not until he has tasted a new birch-rod. I mean to take the young rascal to the police."

But Avdeitch still interceded for him.

"Let him go, my good woman," he said. "He will never do it again. Let him go for Christ's sake."

The old woman released the boy, who was for making off at once had not Avdeitch stopped him.

"You must beg the old woman's pardon," he said, "and never do such a thing again. I saw you take the apple."

The boy burst out crying, and begged the old woman's pardon as Avdeitch commanded.

"There, there," said Avdeitch. "Now I will give you one. Here you are,"—and he took an apple from the basket and handed it to the boy. "I will pay you for it, my good woman," he added.

"Yes, but you spoil the young rascal by doing that," she objected. "He ought to have received a reward that would have made him glad to stand for a week."

"Ah, my good dame, my good dame," exclaimed Avdeitch. "That may be *our* way of rewarding, but it is not God's. If this boy ought to have been whipped for taking the apple, ought not we also to receive something for our sins?"

The old woman was silent. Then Avdeitch related

to her the parable of the master who absolved his servant from the great debt which he owed him, whereupon the servant departed and took his own debtor by the throat. The old woman listened, and also the boy.

"God has commanded us to pardon one another," went on Avdeitch, "or *He* will not pardon us. We ought to pardon all men, and especially the thoughtless."

The old woman shook her head and sighed.

"Yes, that may be so," she said, "but these young rascals are so spoilt already!"

"Then it is for us, their elders, to teach them better," he replied.

"That is what I say myself at times," rejoined the old woman. "I had seven of them once at home, but have only one daughter now." And she went on to tell Avdeitch where she and her daughter lived, and how they lived, and how many grandchildren she had.

"I have only such strength as you see," she said, "yet I work hard, for my heart goes out to my grandchildren—the bonny little things that they are! No children could run to meet me as they do. Aksintka, for instance, will go to no one else. 'Grandmother,' she cries, 'dear grandmother, you are tired'"—and the old woman became thoroughly softened. "Everyone knows what boys are," she added presently, referring to the culprit. "May God go with him!"

She was raising the sack to her shoulders again when the boy darted forward and said:

"Nay, let me carry it, grandmother. It will be all on my way home."

The old woman nodded assent, gave up the sack to the boy, and went away with him down the street. She had quite forgotten to ask Avdeitch for the money for the apple. He stood looking after them, and observing how they were talking together as they went.

Having seen them go, he returned to his room, finding his spectacles—unbroken—on the steps as he descended them. Once more he took up his awl and fell to work, but had done little before he found it difficult to distinguish the stitches, and the lamplighter had passed on his rounds. "I too must light up," he thought to himself. So he trimmed the lamp, hung it up, and resumed his work. He finished one boot completely, and then turned it over to look at it. It was all good work. Then he laid aside his tools, swept up the cuttings, rounded off the stitches and loose ends, and cleaned his awl. Next he lifted the lamp down, placed it on the table, and took his Testament from the shelf. He had intended opening the book at the place which he had marked last night with a strip of leather, but it opened itself at another instead. The instant it did so, his vision of last night came back to his memory, and, as instantly, he thought he heard a movement behind him as of someone moving towards him. He looked round and saw in the shadow of a dark corner what appeared to be figures—figures of persons standing there, yet could not distinguish them clearly. Then the voice whispered in his ear:

"Martin, Martin, dost thou not know Me?"

"Who art Thou?" said Avdeitch.

"Even I!" whispered the voice again. "Lo, it is I!"—and there stepped from the dark corner Stepanitch. He smiled, and then, like the fading of a little cloud, was gone.

"It is I!" whispered the voice again—and there stepped from the same corner the woman with her baby. She smiled, and the baby smiled, and they were gone.

"And it is I!" whispered the voice again—and there stepped forth the old woman and the boy with the apple. They smiled, and were gone.

Joy filled the soul of Martin Avdeitch as he crossed himself, put on his spectacles, and set himself to read the Testament at the place where it had opened. At the top of the page he read:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."

And further down the page he read:

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me."

Then Avdeitch understood that the vision had come true, and that his Saviour had in very truth visited him that day, and that he had received Him.

THE TWO OLD MEN

I

"THE woman saith unto Him, Sir, I see that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

(John iv. 19-23.)

Two old men took it into their heads to go and pray to God in ancient Jerusalem. One of them was a rich peasant named Efim Tarassitch Sheveloff, and the other was a poor man named Elijah Bodroff.

Efim was a sober man. He drank no *vodka*, smoked no tobacco, took no snuff, had never breathed an oath in his life, and was altogether a strict and conscientious citizen. Twice he had served a term as *starosta*, and left office without a figure wrong in his books. He had a large family (his two sons, as well as a grandson, were married), and they all lived together. In person he was an upright, vigorous *muzhik*, with a beard only begun to be streaked with grey now that he had attained his seventieth year. Old Elijah, on the other hand, was a man neither rich nor poor, who, formerly a travelling carpenter, had now settled down and taken to bee-keeping. One of his sons earned his living at home, and the other one away. He was a good-hearted, cheerful old fellow, and drank *vodka*, smoked tobacco, took snuff, and loved a good song. None the less, he was of peaceable disposition, and lived on excellent terms both with his household and the neighbours. In himself he was a man of medium height, with a swarthy complexion and curly beard. Moreover, like his holy namesake, the Prophet Elijah, he was bald.

The two old men had long ago agreed to go upon this pilgrimage together, yet Efim had never been able to find time from his business. As soon as he had got one thing out of hand he would find himself hatching a new scheme. Now he would be marrying a granddaughter, now expecting his younger son home from military service, now planning to erect a new hut.

One day the old men met at a festival, and seated themselves together on a bench.

"Well," said Elijah, "when are we going to carry out that long-agreed-upon scheme of ours?"

Efim frowned. "We must wait a little yet," he said. "This last year has been a heavy one for me. When I planned to build that new hut I reckoned it would cost me about a hundred roubles only, but already the estimate is rising up to three times that amount, and it hasn't come in yet. I must certainly wait until the summer. *Then*, if God pleases, we will go."

"Well," replied Elijah, "it seems to me that we ought not to put it off any longer, but to go now. Spring is the very time for it."

"Time or no time, the work is begun now. How can I go and leave it?"

"But have you no one to leave in charge? Surely your son could see to it?"

"*He* indeed! Why, that eldest son of mine is perfectly useless. He would spoil it all."

"No, no, my old friend. Even if you and I died to-morrow, the world would still go on without us. Your son only needs a little teaching."

"That may be; yet I want to see the work finished under my own eyes."

"Pooh, my dear sir! One never really gets to the end of things. Why, only the other day our women at home were washing the linen and getting ready for the festival—first one thing having to be done, and then another, as if there would never be an end to it all—when at last my eldest daughter-in-law (and she

is a clever woman) exclaimed: 'Never mind if the festival *is* coming on and we shan't be ready. However much we do, we can't do everything.'"

Efim reflected a moment—then said:

"I have laid out a lot of money already on this building scheme, and it would hardly do to set forth on a journey with empty hands. A hundred roubles is no light sum to raise, you know."

Elijah smiled.

"Yes, you must be careful," he said. "Why, your income is ten times as much as mine, yet you worry far more about money than I do. Look at me. Merely tell me when to start, and, little though I possess, I shall be there."

Efim smiled in his turn.

"Are you such a rich man, then, after all?" he said. "Where is it all going to come from?"

"Oh, I shall scrape it together somehow—raise it somehow. If there is no other way of doing so, I shall sell a dozen of my range of bee-hives to a neighbour. He has long been after them."

"And then the swarms will turn out well, and you will be sorry for it."

"Sorry for it? No, no. I have never been sorry for anything in my life except for my sins. There is nothing worth troubling about except one's soul."

"That may be; yet it is awkward to have things go wrong at home."

"But it is still more awkward to have things go wrong with one's soul. Come now! You have as good as promised me, so we must really go. It would be only right of us to do so."

II

Thus Elijah won over his comrade. Next morning Efim took counsel with himself, and then went to see Elijah.

"Yes, we will go very soon now," he said. "You were quite right. In life or in death we are in God's

hands. We ought to go while we are still alive and well."

A week later the two got themselves ready. Efim always kept his money at home, and of it he took 190 roubles for the journey, and left 200 for the old woman. Elijah likewise made his preparations. He sold the neighbour ten out of his range of bee-hives, together with whatever stock of honey they might produce. That brought him in seventy roubles. Another thirty he swept together from one corner and another. His wife gave up the whole of her funeral savings, and their daughter-in-law did the same.

Efim confided the entire direction of his affairs at home to his eldest son, telling him which crops to pull while he was away, and how much of them, where to spread the manure, and how to build and roof the new hut. He thought of everything, left directions for everything. Elijah, on the other hand, merely told his old wife to be careful to collect such young bees as might leave the hives which he had disposed of, and deliver full tale of them to the neighbour. On other domestic matters he said not a word. Circumstances themselves would show what was to be done, and how it was to be done, as circumstances arose. Housewives, he thought, know their own business best.

So the two old men made them ready for the journey. Home-made cakes were baked, wallets contrived, new leggings cut out, new boots procured, and spare shoes provided. Then they set off. Their respective households escorted them to the parish boundary, and there took leave of them. Thus the old men were fairly launched upon their way.

Elijah walked along in high spirits, and forgot all his domestic concerns immediately he had left the village. His only cares were how to beguile the way for his companion, to avoid uttering a single churlish word, and to arrive at his destination and return thence in perfect peace and goodwill. As he walked along he whispered silent prayers to himself or thought over his past life so far as he could remember it.

Whether he fell in with a fellow-traveller, or whether he were begging for a night's lodging, with each and all he endeavoured to associate amicably and with a pious word upon his lips. As he went he rejoiced in heart. One thing, however, he could not do. He had resolved to leave off tobacco, and to that end had left his pipe at home—and he missed it sadly. On the way a man gave him one. Thereafter, lest he should cause his fellow-traveller to stumble, he would fall behind him and smoke quietly.

As for Efim, he walked circumspectly, determined to do nothing amiss and speak no light word, since frivolity was foreign to his soul. Likewise, his domestic cares never left his thoughts. He was forever thinking of how things might be going at home and of the directions he had given to his son, as well as wondering if those directions were being carried out. Whenever he saw peasants setting potatoes or carting manure he at once thought to himself: "Is my son doing as I instructed him?" Sometimes, indeed, he felt like turning back to give fresh directions and see them carried out in person.

III

When the old men had been on the tramp five weeks their home-made bast shoes gave out, and they had to buy new ones. In time they arrived at the country of the *Khokhli*,[1] where, although by this time they were far from the district where they were known and had for some time past been accustomed to pay for their board and lodging each night, these good people vied with each other in entertaining them. They took them in and fed them, yet would accept no money, but sped them on their way with food in their wallets and sometimes new bast shoes as well. Thus the old men covered 700 versts with ease, until they had crossed another province and arrived in a

[1] *I.e.*, the "Tufted Men"—a nickname given to the Ruthenians.

bare and poverty-stricken land Here the inhabitants were willing to take them in, and would accept no money for their night's lodging, yet ceased to provide them with food. Nowhere was even bread given to the travellers, and occasionally it could not be bought. Last year, the people said, nothing had grown. Those who had been rich had ploughed up their land and sold out; those who had been only moderately rich were now reduced to nothing; while those who had been poor had either perished outright or emigrated, with the exception of a few, who still eked out a wretched existence somehow. During the past winter, indeed, such people had lived on chaff and weeds.

One evening the old men stayed the night at a hamlet, and, having bought fifteen pounds of bread, went on before dawn, so as to get as far as possible while it was yet cool. They covered ten versts, and then sat down by a brook, ladled some water into a bowl, soaked and ate some bread, and washed their feet. As they sat and rested Elijah pulled out his horn tobacco-box, whereupon Efim shook his head in disapproval.

"Why not throw that rubbish away?" he said.

"Nay, but if a failing has got the better of one, what s one to do?" replied Elijah with a shrug of his shoulders.

Then they got up and went on for another ten versts. The day had now become intensely hot, and after reaching and passing through a large village, Elijah grew weary, and longed to rest again and have a drink. Efim, however, refused to stop, for he was the better walker of the two, and Elijah often found it difficult to keep up with him.

"Oh, for a drink!" said Elijah.

"Well go and have one. I myself can do without.'

Elijah stopped. "Do not wait for me," he said. "I will run to that hut there and beg a drink, and be after you again in a twinkling."

"Very well," said Efim, and he went on along the road alone, while Elijah turned aside to the hut.

When he came to it he saw that it was a small, plastered cabin, with its lower part black and the upper part white. The plaster was peeling off in patches, and had evidently not been renewed for many a long day, while in one side of the roof there was a large hole. The way to the hut door lay through a yard, and when Elijah entered the latter he saw a man—thin, clean-shaven, and clad only in a shirt and breeches, after the fashion of the *Kholkhi*—lying stretched beside a trench. Somehow he looked as though he were lying there for coolness' sake, yet the sun was glaring down upon him. There he lay, but not as though asleep. Elijah hailed him and asked for a drink, but the man returned no answer. "He must be either ill or uncivil," thought Elijah, and went on to the door of the hut, within which he could hear the voices of two children crying. He knocked first with the iron ring of the door-knocker, and called out "Mistress!" No one answered. Again he knocked with his pilgrim's staff and called out, "Good Christians!" Nothing stirred within the hut. "Servants of God!" he cried once more, and once more received no response. He was just on the point of turning to depart when he heard from behind the door a sound as of someone gasping. Had some misfortune come upon these people? He felt that he must find out, and stepped inside.

IV

The door was unlocked, and the handle turned easily. Passing through a little entrance-porch, the inner door of which stood open, Elijah saw on the left a stove, and in front of him the living portion of the room. In one corner stood an *ikon* frame and a table, while behind the table stood a wooden bench. Upon this bench was seated an old woman—bare-

headed, and clad in a simple shift. Her head was bowed upon her arms, while beside her stood a little boy—thin, waxen in the face, and pot-bellied—who kept clutching her by the sleeve and crying loudly as he besought her for something. The air in the hut was stifling to the last degree. Elijah stepped forward and caught sight of a second woman stretched on a shelf-bunk behind the stove. She was lying face downwards, with her eyes closed, but moaned at intervals as she threw out one of her legs and drew it back again with a writhing movement. An oppressive odour came from the bunk, and it was clear that she had no one to attend to her. All at once the old woman raised her head and caught sight of the stranger.

"What do you want?" she asked in the Little-Russian dialect. "What do you want? Nay, my good man, we have nothing for you here."

None the less, Elijah understood her dialect, and took a step nearer.

"I am a servant of God," he said, "who crave of you a drink of water."

"Nay, but there is no one to get it for you," she replied. "You must take what you require and go."

"And is there no one well enough to wait upon this poor woman?" went on Elijah, presently.

"No, no one. Her man is dying in the yard yonder, and there are only ourselves besides."

The little boy had been stricken to silence by the entry of a stranger, but now the old woman had no sooner finished speaking than he clutched her again by the sleeve.

"Some bread, some bread, granny!" he cried, and burst out weeping.

Elijah was about to question the old woman further when a peasant staggered into the hut, supporting himself by the wall as he did so, and tried to sit down upon the bench. Missing his footing in the attempt, he rolled backwards upon the floor. He made no attempt to rise, but struggled to say something,

speaking a word only at a time, with rests between each one.

"We have sickness here," he gasped, "and famine too. That little one there"—and he nodded towards the boy—"is dying of hunger." He burst into tears.

Elijah unslung his wallet from his shoulders, freed his arms from the strap, and lowered the wallet to the floor. Then he lifted it, placed it on the bench, unfastened it, and, taking out some bread and a knife, cut off a hunch and held it out towards the peasant. Instead of taking it, the man made a movement of his head in the direction of the two children (there was a little girl there also, behind the stove), as much as to say, "Nay, give it to *them*." Accordingly Elijah handed the piece to the little boy, who no sooner caught sight of it than he darted forward, seized it in his tiny hands, and ran off, with his nose fairly buried in the crumb. At the same moment the little girl came out from behind the stove, and simply glued her eyes upon the bread. To her too Elijah handed a piece, and then cut off another for the old woman, who took it and began to chew it at once.

"I beseech you, get us some water," she said presently. "Our mouths are parched. I tried to draw some water this morning (or this afternoon—I hardly know which), but fell down under its weight. The bucket will be there now if you could only bring it."

Upon Elijah asking where the well was, the old woman told him, and he went off. He found the bucket there as she had described, brought some water, and gave each of them a drink. Now that they had had the water, the children managed to devour a second hunch apiece, and the old woman too, but the peasant would not touch anything. "I do not feel inclined," he said. As for his wife, she lay tossing herself to and fro on the bunk, unconscious of what was passing. Elijah returned to a shop in the village, bought some millet, salt, meal, and butter, and hunted out a hatchet. Then, having cut some firewood, he

lighted the stove with the little girl's help, cooked some soup and porridge, and gave these poor people a meal.

V

THE peasant ate but little, but the old woman did better, while the two children cleared a bowlful apiece, and then went to sleep in one another's arms. Presently the man and the old woman began telling Elijah how it had all come upon them.

"We used to make a living," they said, "poor though it was; but when the crop failed last year we found we had exhausted our stock by the autumn, and had to eat anything and everything we could get. Then we tried to beg of neighbours and kind-hearted folk. At first they gave, but later they began to refuse us. There were many who would have given, but they had nothing to give. In time, too, it began to hurt us to beg, for we were in debt to everyone—in debt for money, meal, and bread."

"I tried to get work," went on the peasant, "but there was almost none to be got. Everywhere there were starving men struggling for work. A man might get a little job one day, and then spend the next two in looking for another. The old woman and the little girl walked many a long distance for alms, though what they received was little enough, seeing that many, like ourselves, had not even bread. Still, we managed to feed ourselves somehow, and hoped to win through to the next season. But by the time spring came people had ceased to give at all, and sickness came upon us, and things grew desperate. One day we might have a bite of something to eat, and then nothing at all for two more. At last we took even to eating grass; and whether that was the cause or something else, the wife fell ill as you see. There she lay on the bed, while I myself had come to the end of my strength, and had no means of reviving it."

"Yes, I was the only one who held up," went on

the old woman. "Yet hunger was pulling me down as well, and I was getting weaker every day. The little girl was in the same plight as I was, and taking to having nervous fits. One day I wanted to send her to a neighbour's, but she would not go. She just crept behind the stove and refused. The day before yesterday another neighbour came and looked in; but as soon as she saw that we were ill and starving she turned round and went away again. You see, her own husband had just died, and she had nothing to give her little children to eat. So, when you came, we were just lying here—waiting for death to come."

Elijah listened to their tale, and decided that, as it was doubtful whether he could overtake Efim that day, he had better spend the night here. The next morning he rose and did the housework, as if he himself were the master. Then he helped the old woman to make dough, and lighted the stove. After that he accompanied the little girl to some neighbours' huts, to try and borrow what else was needed, but was unsuccessful everywhere. No one had anything at all—everything had been disposed of for food, down to household necessaries and even clothes. Consequently Elijah had to provide what was needed himself—to buy some things and make others. He spent the whole day like this, and then the next, and then a third. The little boy recovered himself, and began to walk along the bench and to frisk about Elijah, while the little girl grew quite merry and helped in everything. She was forever running after Elijah with her "*Didu, Didusiu!*"[1] The old woman likewise picked up again, and went out to see a neighbour or two, while as for the husband, he progressed so far as to walk a little with the help of the wall. Only his wife still lay sick. Yet on the third day she too opened her eyes and asked for food.

"Now," thought Elijah to himself, "I must be off. I had not expected to be detained so long."

[1] Little Russian for "*Diadia, Diadiushka!*" ("Uncle, dear Uncle!").

VI

It chanced, however, that the fourth (the next) day would be the first of the *rozgovieni*, or days of flesh-eating, and Elijah thought to himself: "How would it be if I were to break my fast with these people, buy them some presents for the festival, and then go on my way in the evening?" So he went to the village again, and bought milk, white meal, and lard. Everyone, from the old woman downwards, boiled and baked that day, and next morning Elijah went to Mass, returned to the hut, and broke his fast with his new friends. That day, too, the wife got up from her bed, and walked about a little. As for the husband, he shaved himself, put on a clean shirt (hastily washed for him by the old woman, since he had only one), and went off to the village to beg the forbearance of a rich peasant to whom both corn- and pasture-land had been mortgaged, and to pray that he would surrender them before the harvest. Towards evening the husband returned with a dejected air, and burst into tears. The rich peasant, it seemed, had refused his request, saying, "Bring me the money first."

Elijah took counsel with himself again. "How are these people to live without land?" he thought. "Strangers will come and reap the crops, and leave nothing at all for them, since the crops are mortgaged. However good the rye may turn out to be (and Mother Earth is looking well now), strangers will come and harvest it all, and these people can look to receive nothing, seeing that their one *dessiatin* of corn-land is in fee to the rich peasant. If I were to go away now, they would come to rack and ruin again."

He was so distressed by these thoughts that he did not leave that evening, but deferred his departure until the next morning. He went to sleep in the yard as usual, and lay down after he had said his prayers. Nevertheless his eyes would not close. "Yes, I ought to go," he thought "for I have spent too much time

and money here already. I am sorry for these people, but one cannot benefit everyone. I meant only to give them a drop of water and a slice of bread; yet see what that slice has led to! Still," he went on, "why not redeem their corn- and meadow-land while I am about it? Yes, and buy a cow for the children and a horse for the father's harvesting? Ah, well, you have got your ideas into a fine tangle, Elijah Kuzmitch! You are dragging your anchors, and can't make head or tail of things."

So he raised himself, took his cloak from under his head, turned it over until he had found his horn tobacco-box, and smoked to see if that would clear his thoughts. He pondered and pondered, yet could come to no decision. He wanted to go, and at the same time felt sorry for these people. Which way was it to be? He really did not know. At last he refolded his cloak under his head and stretched himself out again. He lay like that until the cocks were crowing, and then dozed off to sleep. Suddenly someone seemed to have aroused him, and he found himself fully dressed and girded with wallet and staff—found himself walking out of the entrance-gates of the yard. But those gates were so narrow, somehow, that even a single person could hardly get through them. First his wallet caught on one of the gates, and when he tried to release it, the gate on the other side caught his legging and tore it right open Turning to release it also, he found that, after all, it was not the gate that was holding it, but the little girl, and that she was crying out, "*Didiu! Didiusiu!* Give me some bread!" Then he looked at his leg again, and there was the little boy also holding on to the legging, while their father and the old woman were looking from a window. He awoke, and said to himself: "I will buy out their land for them to-morrow—yes, and buy them a horse and cow as well. Of what avail is it to go across the sea to seek Christ if all the time I lose the Christ that is within me here? Yes, I must put these people straight again"—and he fell asleep until

morning. He rose betimes, went to the rich peasant, and redeemed both the rye-crop and the hay. Then he went and bought a scythe (for these people's own scythe had been sold, together with everything else), and took it home with him. He set a man to mow the hay, while he himself went hunting among the *muzhiks* until he found a horse and cart for sale at the innkeeper's. He duly bargained for and bought it, and then continued his way in search of a cow. As he was walking along the street he overtook two *Kholkhi* women, who were chatting volubly to each other as they went. He could hear that it was of himself they were speaking, for one of the women said:

"When he first came they could not tell at all what he was, but supposed him to be a pilgrim. He only came to beg a drink of water, yet he has been there ever since. There is nothing he is not ready to buy them. I myself saw him buying a horse and cart to-day at the innkeeper's. There cannot be many such people in the world. I should like to see this marvellous pilgrim."

When Elijah heard this, and understood that it was himself they were praising, he forbore to go and buy the cow, but returned to the innkeeper and paid over the money for the horse and cart. Then he harnessed the horse, and drove home to the hut. Driving right up to the gates, he stopped and alighted. His hosts were surprised to see the horse, and although it crossed their minds that possibly he might have bought it for themselves, they hesitated to say so. However, the husband remarked as he ran to open the gates: "So you have bought a new horse, then, grandfather?" To this Elijah merely answered: "Yes, but I only bought it because it happened to be going cheap. Cut some fodder, will you, and lay it in the manger for its food to-night?" So the peasant unharnessed the horse, cut some swathes of grass, and filled the manger. Then everyone lay down to rest. But Elijah lay out upon the roadway, whither he had taken his wallet beforehand; and when all the

people were asleep he arose, girded on his wallet, put on his boots and cloak, and went on his way to overtake Efim.

VII

When Elijah had gone about five versts, the day began to break. He sat down under a tree, opened his wallet, and began to make calculations. According to his reckoning, he had seventeen roubles and twenty copecks left. "Well," he thought, "I can't get across the sea on that, and to raise the rest in Christ's name would be a sin indeed. Friend Efim must finish the journey alone, and offer my candle for me. Yes, my vow must remain unfulfilled now until I die; but, thanks be to God, the Master is merciful and long-suffering."

So he rose, slung his wallet across his shoulders, and went back. Yet he made a circuit of the village—of *that* village—so that the people should not see him. Soon he was near home again. When he had been travelling *away* from home, walking had been an effort, and he had hardly been able to keep up with Efim; but now that he was travelling *towards* home it seemed as if God helped his steps and never let him know weariness. As he went along he jested, swung his staff about, and covered seventy versts a day.

So he came home. A crowd gathered from the fields, far and near, and his entire household ran to greet their old head. Then they began to ply him with questions—as to how, when, and where everything had happened, why he had left his comrade behind, why he had returned home without completing the journey, and so on. Elijah did not make a long story of it.

"God did not see fit to bring me to my goal," he said. "I lost some money on the road, and got separated from my companion. So I went no further. Pardon me, for Christ's sake,"—and he handed what was left of the money to his old goodwife. Then he

asked her about his domestic affairs. All was well with them, everything had been done, there had been no neglect of household management, and the family had lived in peace and amity.

Efim's people heard the same day that Elijah had returned, and went to him to ask about their own old man. Elijah merely told them the same story. "Your old man," he said, "was quite well when he parted from me. That was three days before the Feast of Saint Peter. I meant to catch him up later, but various matters intervened where I was. I lost my money, and had not enough to continue upon, so I came back."

Everyone was surprised that a man of such sense could have been so foolish as to set out and yet never reach his journey's end, but only waste his money. They were surprised—and then forgot all about it. Elijah did the same. He resumed his household work—helping his son to get firewood ready against the winter, giving the women a hand with the corn-grinding, roofing the stable, and seeing to his bees. Likewise he sold another ten hives, with their produce, to the neighbour. His old wife wanted to conceal how many of the hives had been swarmed from, but Elijah knew without her telling him which of them had swarmed and which were barren, and handed over seventeen hives to the neighbour instead of ten. Then he put everything straight, sent off his son to look for work for himself, and sat down for the winter to plait bast shoes and carve wooden clogs

VIII

All that day when Elijah found the sick people in the hut and remained with them, Efim had waited for his companion. First he went on a little way and sat down. There he waited and waited, dozed off, woke up again, and went on sitting—but no Elijah appeared. He looked and looked about for him, while the sun

sank behind a tree—yet still no Elijah. "Can he have passed me," thought Efim, "or have been given a lift and so have *driven* past me, without noticing me where I sat asleep? Yet he could not have helped seeing me if that had been the case. In this steppe country one can see a long way. It would be no good my going back for him, since he might miss me on the road, and we should be worse off than ever. No, I will go on, and we shall probably meet at the next halting-place for the night." In time Efim came to a village, and asked the *Desiatnik*[1] there to see to it that if such and such an old man (and he described Elijah) arrived later he should be directed to the same hut as himself. But Elijah never arrived to spend the night, so Efim went on again the next morning, asking everyone whom he saw if they had come across a bald-headed old man. No one had done so, however. Efim was surprised, but still pushed on alone. "We shall meet somewhere in Odessa," he thought, "or on board the ship," and forthwith dismissed the matter from his mind.

On the road he fell in with a travelling monk who, dressed in skull-cap and cassock, had been to Athos, and was now on his way to Jerusalem for the second time. They happened to lodge at the same place one night, and agreed henceforth to go together.

They arrived at Odessa without mishap, but were forced to wait three days for a ship. There were many other pilgrims waiting there, come from all parts of Russia, and among them Efim made further inquiries about Elijah, but no one had seen him.

The monk told Efim how he could get a free passage if he wished, but Efim would not hear of it. "I would much rather pay," he said. "I have made provision for that." So he paid down forty roubles for a passage out and home, as well as laid in a stock of bread and herrings to eat on the way. In time the vessel was loaded and the pilgrims taken on board, Efim and the monk keeping close to one another. Then the anchor

[1] Headman of a hamlet of ten families (or thereabouts).

was weighed, sail set, and they put out to sea. All that first day they had smooth sailing, but towards evening the wind arose, the rain came down, and the vessel began to roll heavily and ship water. The passengers were flung from side to side, the women began wailing, and those of the men whose stomachs were weaker than those of their fellows went below in search of berths. Efim too felt qualms, but repressed any outward manifestation of them, and remained sitting the whole of that night and the following day in the same position on deck which he had secured on embarking, and which he shared with some old people from Tamboff. They held on to their baggage, and squatted there in silence. On the third day it grew calmer, and on the fifth they put into Constantinople, where some of the pilgrims landed and went to look at the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, now a Mahomedan mosque. Efim did not land, but remained sitting where he was. After a stay of twenty-four hours they put to sea again, and, calling only at Smyrna and Alexandria, arrived without mishap at their port of destination, Jaffah. There all the pilgrims disembarked for the seventy versts' tramp to Jerusalem, the business of landing being a nerve-shaking one for the poor people, since they had to be lowered into small boats, and, the ship's side being high and the boats rocking violently, it always looked as though the passenger would overshoot the boat. As a matter of fact, two men did get a ducking, but eventually everyone came safely to land. Once there, they lost no time in pushing forward, and on the fourth day arrived at Jerusalem. They passed through the city to a Russian hostel, showed their passports, had some food, and were conducted by the monk around the Holy Places. To the actual Holy Sepulchre itself there was no admission that day, but they first of all attended Matins at the Greek Monastery of the Patriarch (where they said their prayers and offered votive candles) and then went to gaze at the outside of the Church of the Resurrection, in which lies the actual

Sepulchre of the Lord, but which is so built as to conceal all view of the Sepulchre from outside. That first day also they were afforded a glimpse of the cell where Mary of Egypt took refuge, and duly offered candles there and recited a thanksgiving. They next wished to return to Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but found that they were too late, and so went on to the Monastery of Abraham in the Garden of Saveki, where Abraham once wished to sacrifice his son to the Lord. Thence they proceeded to the place where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, and thence to the Church of Saint James, the brother of Our Lord. At all these places the monk acted as their guide, telling them everywhere how much to pay and where to offer candles. At length they returned to the hostel, and had just retired to rest when the monk suddenly sprang up, and began rummaging among his clothes. "Someone has stolen my purse and money!" he exclaimed. "The purse had twenty-three roubles in it—two ten-rouble notes and three roubles in coin!" He raged and stormed for some time, but there was no help for it, and eventually they all lay down to sleep.

IX

Efim lay down with the rest, and a temptation fell upon him. "I do not believe," he thought to himself, "that the monk was robbed, for he had nothing which thieves could take. He never gave anything anywhere. He told *me* to give, but never gave anything himself, and even borrowed a rouble of me."

But almost instantly he began to reproach himself for thinking so. "Who am I," he said, "to judge another? It is sinful of me, and I will refrain from these thoughts." It was not long, however, before he found himself remembering again how watchful of money the monk had been, and how unlikely it was that his tale of being robbed could be true. "He had

nothing to be robbed of," thought Efim once more. "It was a mere excuse."

In the morning they rose and went to early mass at the great Church of the Resurrection—at the Holy Sepulchre itself. The monk never left Efim, but walked by his side all the way. When they entered the church they found a great crowd there, both of monks and pilgrims—Russian, Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Syrian, as well as of obscurer nationalities. Efim approached the Holy Gates with the others, passed the Turkish guards, and reached the spot where the Saviour was taken down from the Cross, and where now stood nine candlesticks with lighted tapers. There he offered a candle, and was then conducted by the monk up the steps on the right to Golgotha, to the spot where the Cross had stood. There Efim knelt down and prayed. Then he was shown the cleft where the earth was rent, the spot where Christ's hands and feet were nailed to the Cross, and the Tomb of Adam, where Christ's blood had trickled down upon Adam's bones. Next they came to the stone on which Christ sat while the Crown of Thorns was being placed upon His head, and then to the pillar to which He was bound for the scourging. Finally Efim saw the stone with the two holes for the feet of Christ. They would have shown him something more had not the crowd hurried forward, for all were eager to reach the actual catacomb of the Lord's Sepulchre. There a foreign Mass had just ended, and the Orthodox was beginning. Efim entered the Sepulchre with the rest.

He wanted to get rid of the monk, for he found himself continually sinning in his thoughts against him; but the monk still kept by his side, and entered with him into the Holy Sepulchre to hear Mass. They tried to get nearer to the front, but found it impossible, since the people were so closely packed that any movement either backward or forward was out of the question. As Efim stood gazing to the front and trying to pray, he found himself continually feeling for his purse. Two thoughts kept passing through his

mind. The first was—"Is the monk cheating me all the time?" and the second was—"If he has not been cheating me, and really had his purse stolen, why did they not do the same to me as well?"

X

As Efim stood thus, praying and gazing towards the chapel in which the actual Sepulchre stood, with thirty-six lamps always burning above it—suddenly, as he stood peering through the heads in front of him, he saw a strange thing. Immediately beneath the lamps, and ahead of all the congregation, he perceived an old man, dressed in a rough serge *kaftan*, and with a shining bald head like Elijah Bodroff's. "How exactly like Elijah he is!" thought Efim to himself. "Yet it cannot possibly be he, for it would have been impossible for him to get here before myself. The last ship before our own sailed a whole week before we did, so he could never have caught it. And he certainly was not on our own, for I looked at every pilgrim on board."

Just as these thoughts had passed through Efim's mind, the old man in front began to pray, with three bows as he did so: one forwards, to God, and one on either side of him, to the whole Orthodox world. And lo! as the old man turned his head to bow towards his right, Efim recognized him beyond all possibility of doubt. It *was* Elijah Bodroff! Yes, that *was* Elijah's curly black beard—those *were* his eyebrows, his eyes, his nose—those *were* his features altogether! Yes, it *was* he, and nobody else—Elijah Bodroff!

Efim was overjoyed at having found his comrade, though also not a little surprised that Elijah could have arrived before him.

"He must have slipped past me somewhere, and then gone on ahead with someone who helped him on the way," thought Efim. "However, I will catch

him as we pass out, and get rid of this monk in the skull-cap. After that Elijah and I will keep together again. He might have got me to the front now if he had been with me."

So he kept his eyes fixed upon Elijah, determined not to lose sight of him. At last the Mass came to an end, and the people began to move. Indeed, there was such a crush as everyone pressed forward to kiss the Cross that Efim got jambed into a corner. Once more the thought that his purse might be stolen from him made him nervous, so he squeezed it tightly in his hand and set himself to force his way clear of the throng. Succeeding at last, he ran hither and thither, seeking Elijah, but eventually had to leave the church without having come across him. Next he visited the various hostels, to make inquiries about him, but, although he traversed the whole city, he could not find him anywhere. That evening, too, the monk did not return. He had departed without repaying the rouble, and Efim was left alone.

Next day, Efim went to the Holy Sepulchre again, accompanied by one of the old men from Tamboff who had been with him on the ship. Once more he tried to get to the front, and once more he got thrust aside, so that he had to stand by a pillar to say his prayers. He peered through the heads in front of him again, and, behold! ahead of all the congregation, and under the very lamps of the Lord's Sepulchre, stood Elijah as before! He had his arms spread out like those of a priest at the altar, and his bald head was shining all over.

"Now," thought Efim, "I do not mean to lose him this time." So he started to worm his way forward, and eventually succeeded—but Elijah had vanished. He must have left the church.

The third day also Efim went to Mass, and once more looked for Elijah. And once more there stood Elijah, in the same position as before, and having the same appearance. His arms were spread out and he was gazing upwards, as though beholding

something above him, while his bald head again shone brightly.

"Well," thought Efim, "come what may, I am not going to lose him this time. I will go straight away and post myself at the entrance, where we cannot possibly miss each other."

So he did so, and stood waiting and waiting as the people passed out; but Elijah did not come with them.

Efim remained six weeks in Jerusalem. He visited all the holy spots—Bethlehem, Bethany, the Jordan, and the rest—as well as had a new shirt stamped with a seal at the Holy Sepulchre (to be buried in one day), took away water from the Jordan in a phial, took away also earth and candles from the Holy Place, and spent all his money except just what was sufficient to bring him home again. Then he started to return, reached Jaffah, embarked, made the passage to Odessa, and set out upon his long overland tramp.

XI

Efim travelled alone, and by the same route as on the outward journey. Gradually as he drew nearer home there came back to him his old anxiety to know how things had been faring in his absence. "So much water passes down a river in a year!" he thought. "A home may take a lifetime to build up, and an hour to destroy." So he kept constantly wondering how his son had managed affairs since his departure, what sort of a spring it had been, how the cattle had stood the winter, and whether the new hut was finished.

When in time he arrived where he had parted from Elijah he found it hard to recognize the people of the locality. Where last year they had been destitute, to-day they were living comfortably, for the crops had been good everywhere. The inhabitants had recovered themselves, and quite forgotten their former tribulations. So it came about that one evening Efim

was drawing near to the identical village where Elijah had left him a year ago. He had almost reached it, when a little girl in a white frock came dancing out of a hut near by, calling out as she did so, "Grandfather! Dear grandfather! Come in and see us." Efim was for going on, but she would not let him, and, catching him by the skirt of his coat, pulled him laughingly towards the hut. Thereupon a woman and a little boy came out onto the steps, and the former beckoned to Efim, saying: "Yes, pray come in, grandfather, and sup and spend the night." So Efim approached the hut, thinking to himself, "I might get news of Elijah here, for surely this is the very hut to which he turned aside to get a drink." He went in, and the woman relieved him of his wallet, gave him water to wash in, and made him sit down at the table; after which she produced milk, and dumplings, and porridge, and set them before him.

Efim thanked her kindly, and commended her readiness to welcome a pilgrim. The woman shook her head in deprecation of this. "We could do no otherwise," she answered, "for it was from a pilgrim that we learnt the true way of life. We had been living in forgetfulness of God, and He so punished us that we came very near to death's door. It was last year, in the summer, and things had gone so hard with us that we were, one and all, lying ill and starving. Of a surety we should have died, had not God sent to us just such another old man as yourself. He came in at midday, to beg a drink of water, and was seized with compassion when he saw us, and remained here. He gave us food and drink and set us on our feet, redeemed our land for us, bought us a horse and cart —and then disappeared."

The old woman entered the hut at this moment, and the younger one broke off.

"Yes," went on the old woman, "to this day we do not know whether that man may not have been an angel of God. He loved us, pitied us, and yet went away without saying who he was, so that we know not for

whom to pray. Even now it all passes before my eyes. I was lying there, waiting for death, when I chanced to look up and saw that an old man—an ordinary-looking old man, except for his baldness—had entered to beg some water. I (may God forgive me for my sinfulness!) thought to myself: 'Who is this vagabond?' Yet listen now to what he did. No sooner had he seen us than he took off his wallet, and, laying it down here—yes, here, on this very spot—unfastened it and—"

"No, no, granny," broke in the little girl, eagerly. "First of all he laid the wallet in the *middle* of the hut, and *then* set it on the bench"—and they fell to vieing with one another in recalling Elijah's every word and deed—where he had sat, where he had slept, and all that he had said and done to everybody.

At nightfall the master of the house came riding up to the hut on horseback, and soon took up the tale of Elijah's life with them. "Had he not come to us then," he said, "we should all of us have died in sin; for, as we lay there dying and despairing, we were murmuring both against God and man. But this holy pilgrim set us on our feet once more, and taught us to trust in God and to believe in the goodness of our fellow men. Christ be with him! Before, we had lived only as beasts: 'twas he that made us human."

So these good people entertained Efim with food and drink, showed him to a bed, and themselves lay down to sleep. But Efim could not sleep, for the memory of Elijah—of Elijah as he had three times seen him at the head of the congregation in Jerusalem—would not leave him.

"Somewhere on the road he must have passed me," he thought. "Yet, however that may be, and no matter whether my pilgrimage be accepted or not, God has accepted *him*."

In the morning his hosts parted with Efim, loaded him with pasties for the journey, and went off to their work, while Efim pursued his way.

XII

JUST a year had passed when Efim arrived home—arrived home in the spring. The time was evening, and his son was not in the hut, but at a tavern. At length he came home in drink, and Efim questioned him. There was abundant evidence that his son had been living a dissolute life in his absence. He had wasted all the money committed to his care, and neglected everything. His father broke out into reproaches, to which the son replied with insolence.

"You went gaily off on your travels," he said, "and took most of the money with you. Yet now you require it of *me!*" The old man lost his temper and struck him.

Next morning, as he was going to the *starosta* to give up his passport, he passed Elijah's yard. On the lodge-step stood Elijah's old wife, who greeted Efim warmly.

"How are you, my good sir?" she said. "So you have returned safe and well?"

Efim stopped. "Yes, I have returned, glory be to God," he replied. "But I lost sight of your good husband, although I hear that he is back now."

The old woman responded readily, for she loved chatting.

"Yes, he is back, good sir," she said. "He returned some while ago—it was just after the Feast of the Assumption—and glad we were that God had brought him safely! We had been sadly dull without him. He can work but little now, for his best years lie behind him, but he remains always our head, and we are happier when he is here. How delighted our boy was! 'Life without daddy,' said he 'is like having no light to see by.' Yes, we found it dull indeed without Elijah. We love him too well not to have missed him sorely."

"Then perhaps he is at home at this moment?"

"Yes, he is at home, and busy at his hive-bench,

taking a swarm. He says that the swarms have been magnificent this year—that God has given the bees such health and vigour as he has never known before. Truly, he says, God does not reward us after our sins. But come in, my dear sir. He will be delighted to see you."

So Efim stepped through the lodge, crossed the courtyard, and went to find Elijah in the bee-garden. As he entered it he caught sight of him—unprotected by netting or gloves, and clad only in a grey *khaftan*—standing under a young birch tree. His arms were spread out and his face turned upwards, with the crown of his bald head shining all over, as when he had stood those three times by the Lord's Sepulchre in Jerusalem; while above him—as also in Jerusalem—the sun was playing through the birch branches like a great burning lamp, and around his head the golden bees were dancing in and out and weaving themselves into a diadem, without stinging him. Efim stood still where he was.

Then Elijah's wife called out: "Husband! A friend has come to see you." Elijah looked round, his face broke out into smiles, and he ran to meet his comrade, gently brushing some bees from his beard as he did so.

"Good day to you, good day to you, my dear old friend!" he cried. "Then did you get there safely?"

"Yes, of a surety. My feet carried me safely, and I have brought you home some Jordan water. Come and see me some time and get it. Yet I know not if my task has been accepted of God, or—"

"Surely, surely it has. Glory be to Him and to Our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Efim was silent a moment; then continued: "Yes, my feet carried me thither; but whether I was there also in spirit, or whether it were another who—"

"Nay, nay. That is God's affair, my old comrade—God's affair."

"Well, on my way back," added Efim, "I stopped at the hut where you parted from me."

Elijah seemed frightened, and hastened to interrupt him. "That also is God's affair, my friend—God's affair," he said. "But come into the hut, and I will get you some honey"—and he hurried to change the conversation by talking of household matters.

Efim sighed, and forebore to tell Elijah of the people in the hut or of his having seen him in Jerusalem. But this clearly did he understand: that in this world God has commanded everyone, until death, to work off his debt of duty by means of love and good works.

THE THREE OLD MEN

"And when ye pray, make not vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much asking. Be not like unto them, for your Heavenly Father knows what ye have need of before ye ask Him." (Matt. vi. 7, 8.)

An Archbishop was making the voyage from Archangel to Solovki, and on the ship were several pilgrims. The wind was favourable, the weather bright, and the vessel steady. The pilgrims were chatting to one another—some lying down, some eating, some sitting in groups. The Archbishop came on deck, and began pacing to and fro on the fore-and-aft bridge. Presently, as he drew near to the forecastle, he perceived a knot of passengers gathered there, among whom a little *muzhik* was pointing towards something on the sea and relating some tale or other, while the crowd listened. The Archbishop halted and looked in the direction in which the *muzhik* was pointing, but could see nothing except the sea glittering in the sun. Then he drew nearer and began to listen, but as soon as the *muzhik* saw him he took off his cap and became silent. His listeners also saw the Archbishop, took off their caps, and did him reverence.

"Do not be disturbed, my brethren," said the Archbishop. "I did but come to join the others in listening to what you, my good friend, were saying."

"The little fisherman was telling us about the old men," ventured a merchant more daring than the rest.

"What of them?" asked the Archbishop as he crossed over to the side and seated himself on a chest. "Tell me, for I should like to hear. What were you pointing to just now?"

"To the little island showing faintly over there," replied the little peasant as he pointed forward and to starboard. "On that little island over there there live some old men who are servants of God."

"Point out that island to me exactly, will you?" said the Archbishop.

"Be so good, then, your Holiness, as to glance along my hand. You will see a little cloud, and below it and to the left of it something which looks like a dark streak on the horizon."

The Archbishop looked and looked, yet the water was so specked with sunlight that his unaccustomed eye could make out nothing.

"No, I cannot see it," he said. "But what are they like, those old men who live there?"

"They are holy men," replied the peasant. "I heard of them first a long, long while ago, but it was not until last summer that I ever obtained a sight of them."

And the fisherman repeated the story of how he had been sailing in his boat after fish, when it struck upon this island, although he did not know at the time where he was. In the morning, he said, he landed to look about him, and came upon a little mud hut, beside which an old man was sitting, and out of which two others emerged presently. They gave him food, dried his clothes, and helped him to repair his boat.

"What were they like to look at?" asked the Archbishop further.

"One of them was small and hunch-backed, as well as very, very old, and dressed in a cassock of ancient style. He must have been over a hundred years old at the least, for the grey hairs in his beard had begun to show green; yet he was as bright and cheerful of countenance as an angel of Heaven. There was a second old man, likewise very ancient, but taller than the first, and dressed in a ragged *khaftan*. His long beard was half yellow, half grey, yet he was clearly a strong man, for he turned my boat over as though it had been a pail, and my assistance was quite unnecessary. He too was of cheerful countenance. As for the third old man, he was of great height, with a beard reaching to his knees and as white as the

plumage of a ger-falcon; yet his countenance was gloomy, with beetling brows, and he was naked save for a loin-cloth."

"And what did they say to you?" inquired the Archbishop.

"Most of what they did they did in silence, and seldom spoke, even to one another. One of them would look at the other, and the other one would understand him at once. I asked the tallest of them whether they had lived there long, and he frowned and said something, as though vexed, but the little old man—the eldest of the three—took him by the hand and smiled: and for a moment there was a great silence. All that the eldest one said then was, 'Pardon us;' and then he smiled again."

While the peasant had been speaking the ship had been drawing nearer to a group of islands.

"It is quite visible now," put in the merchant. "Pray look over yonder, your Holiness," he added as he pointed forward. The Archbishop did so, and could clearly distinguish a little island like a dark streak on the water. At this island he gazed intently, and then went aft from the forecastle to the poop, and approached the helmsman.

"What is the name of that island over there?" he asked.

"That island? It has no name. There are many such about here."

"Then is it true what they say—that some holy men live there?"

"It is said so, your Holiness, but I do not know if it be true. There are fishermen who say that they have seen them, but it often happens that they are only spinning yarns."

"I should like to touch at that island and see the old men," said the Archbishop. "Could that be done?"

"Well, your Holiness, no ship can put in there, only a small boat, and you would need to ask the captain's leave."

So the captain was sent for.

"I should like to go and see those old men," said the Archbishop. "Could you land me there?"

The captain demurred. "Whether I could or not," he said, "it would cost us much time. Besides, I would represent to your Holiness that it would not be worth your while to go and see the old men, for I have heard that they are imbeciles who understand nothing and are as dumb as the fishes of the sea."

"Nevertheless, I should like to see them," replied the Archbishop, "and would pay you well for your trouble if you could land me there."

After that it only remained to give orders to the crew and to have the sails put about. The helmsman also altered his course, and the ship headed for the island. A chair was set for the Archbishop on the forecastle, so that he might sit there and look towards the island, and round him gathered the ship's company, all gazing in the same direction. Already those with keener eyes could see the rocks fringing the shore and point out the little hut, out of which one of the three old men was already peering. The captain produced a telescope, and, having looked through it, handed it to the Archbishop. "I think," said the captain, "that I can make out three men standing on the beach, just to the right of a large rock." So the Archbishop also looked through the telescope towards the spot indicated. Yes, there seemed to be three men there—one of them very tall, one rather shorter than he, and one a man of small stature. They were standing hand-in-hand upon the beach.

The captain now approached the Archbishop. "Here, your Holiness," he said, "we must heave the ship to, but if you still wish to land, you can do so by small boat, while we remain at anchor here."

So a cable was run out and the sails furled. Then the anchor was let go, and the barque swung to and fro at the cable's end as her course was checked. A boat was lowered, the rowers jumped in, and the Archbishop began to let himself down the companion-

ladder. Rung by rung he descended until he had seated himself in the stern sheets of the boat, whereupon the rowers gave weigh and headed for the island. Arrived under the large rock for which they had been steering, they saw standing there three old men—one of them tall and naked but for a loin-cloth, a second one shorter and clad in a ragged *khaftan*, and a very, very old hunchback in an antiquated cassock. There the three stood, hand in hand.

The rowers grappled the shore with a boat-hook, and made fast, after which the Archbishop stepped out. The old men made obeisance to him, and he blessed them in return, whereupon they bowed still lower. Then the Archbishop spoke.

"I heard," he said, "that you three holy men were living the devout life here and praying to Christ for the sins of mankind; wherefore I—also an unworthy servant of Christ, called to feed His flock—am here by the mercy of God, that I might see you and, if possible, impart to you instruction."

The old men said nothing—only smiled and looked at one another.

"Tell me, will you," went on the Archbishop, "what your devotions are and how you serve God?"

The old man of medium height sighed and looked at the most ancient of the three, while the tallest of them knit his brows and also looked at the most ancient. The latter smiled once more and said:

"O servant of God, we know not how to serve Him. We know but how to serve ourselves, to support ourselves."

"In what form, then, do you pray to God?" asked the Archbishop and the eldest replied:

"We pray thus: 'Ye are three, and we are three. Have Ye mercy upon us.'"

And instantly as the old man said this, the three raised their eyes to heaven and said in unison: "Ye are Three, and we are three. Have Ye mercy upon us."

The Archbishop smiled and said: "It seems that

you have heard of the Blessed Trinity: yet that is not the way in which you should pray. I feel drawn towards you, O old men of God, and perceive that you wish to please Him, yet know not rightly how to serve Him. It is not thus that you should pray, but rather in the manner that I will teach you, if you will listen to me. Yet not of myself comes this knowledge which I am about to impart to you, but of Holy Writ, wherein God has set forth how all men should pray unto Him."

So the Archbishop began to expound to the old men how God revealed Himself to mankind, as well as to speak at length concerning God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Then he said:

"God the Son, who came to earth to save mankind, did thus command that all men should pray unto Him. Listen, and repeat it after me."

"Our Father," began the Archbishop, and "Our Father" repeated the first old man, "Our Father" repeated the second, and "Our Father" repeated the third.

"—Which art in Heaven," continued the Archbishop, and "—Which art in Heaven" re-echoed the three old men. None the less, the one of medium height kept mixing up his words and pronouncing them incorrectly, while the tall, naked old man could not speak distinctly for the beard which covered his mouth and hindered his utterance. As for the eldest and toothless old man, he only stammered out his words in a meaningless sort of way.

The Archbishop repeated the sentence a second time, and the old men after him. Then he sat down upon a rock, and the old men stood round him, looking attentively into his face, and learning by rote what he taught them. All that afternoon until evening did the Archbishop labour with them. Ten, twenty—even a hundred—times would he repeat a single word, until the old men had learnt it by heart. They would keep stumbling over it and he correcting them,

after which he would bid them repeat the whole again from the beginning.

Indeed, the Archbishop did not leave them until he had taught them the whole of the Lord's Prayer, so that they could recite it both after him and by themselves. The eldest of the three was the first to grasp it in its entirety, yet the Archbishop made him say it again, and then repeat it again and yet again. So with the others also.

When at length the Archbishop rose to return to the ship it was beginning to grow dark and the moon was rising out of the sea. He took leave of the old men, and they prostrated themselves at his feet. He raised them, kissed them each on the forehead, bid them pray as he had instructed them, and re-entered the boat to return to the ship.

All the while that he was being rowed thither he could hear them reciting aloud, and in three different voices, the Lord's Prayer; but by the time the boat had reached the ship their voices had faded out of hearing, and only their forms were discernible in the moonlight. They were still standing in the self-same spot, those old men; one—the shortest—in the middle, the tallest on the right, and the one of medium height on the left.

The Archbishop reached the ship and climbed aboard. The anchor was weighed and the sails hoisted, until presently, as the wind filled out the canvas, the ship began to move and continued on her voyage. The Archbishop went onto the poop, sat down, and fixed his eyes upon the island. For a time the three old men remained still visible, but gradually they disappeared from view, and only the outline of the island could be seen. Then it too disappeared, and the lonely sea played in the moonlight.

The pilgrims had now turned in for the night, and all was quiet on deck. Yet the Archbishop did not feel sleepy as he sat alone on the poop and gazed at the sea in the direction of the vanished island and thought of the good old men. He remembered how

pleased they had been to learn the Lord's Prayer, and thanked God that it had been vouchsafed him to bring aid to those pious hermits and teach them God's Word.

Thus did the Archbishop sit thinking and gazing towards the sea-line where the island had disappeared. Then something far away in the distance began to flicker in his eyes, and a light seemed to come stealing thence over the face of the waters. Suddenly that something became definite—became something which shone and showed white in the track of the moon. Surely it was either a sea-bird or the tiny sail of a fishing-boat. The Archbishop gazed attentively at it. "It is a boat sailing to catch us up," he thought: "nor will it be long before it does so. A moment ago it was a long, long way off, yet now it is drawing near to us so quickly that it will soon be plainly visible. But no," he went on presently, "that boat, as I took it to be, is no boat, nor does that resemble a sail. Whatever it is, it is pursuing us, and will quickly overhaul us." Yet still the Archbishop could not make out for certain what the thing was—whether a boat, or not a boat; whether a bird, or not a bird; whether a fish, or not a fish. Hold! There was something there, looking like a man and very large! Yet it could not be a man—a man out there in the middle of the waters! The Archbishop rose and crossed to the helmsman. "Look," he said to him. "What is that thing there?"

"Ay, my man, what is it, what is it?" asked the Archbishop again—and then saw for himself that it was the three old men running on the sea, their grey beards showing dazzlingly bright, and their feet overhauling the ship as though it had been standing still!

The helmsman stared, let fall the tiller in his fear, and shouted at the top of his voice: "Oh, God of Heaven! There are three old men running upon the sea as upon dry land!"

The ship's company heard him, rushed on deck,

and crowded to the poop. Everyone could see the old men running and holding each other by the hand as they did so.

Then the two outer ones of the three held up each of them a hand, and commanded the ship to stop. They ran upon the sea as upon dry land, yet without moving their feet at all.

The ship had not been brought to when the old men reached it, approached the bulwark, raised their heads above it, and cried with one voice:

"O servant of God, we have forgotten, we have forgotten all that you taught us. So long as we repeated it we remembered it, but for an hour we ceased to repeat it, and every word escaped us. We have forgotten it all—it is all gone from us. None of it can we recall. Teach us thou it again."

Then the Archbishop crossed himself, bent over the bulwark to the old men, and said:

"*Your* prayer too, O ancient men of God, was profitable unto the Lord. It is not for me to teach you. Pray you rather for us sinners."

And the Archbishop bowed to his feet before the old men. For a moment they stood motionless—then turned, and went back across the sea. And until morning a light could be seen glowing in the direction in which they had departed.

GOD SEES THE RIGHT, THOUGH HE BE SLOW TO DECLARE IT

In the town of Vladimir there lived a young merchant named Aksenoff, who possessed two shops and a house.

In person Aksenoff was ruddy, curly-haired, and altogether handsome. Moreover, he was a singer and wit of the first order. From his youth upward he had been given to drinking habits, and, when drunk, to brawling; yet, as soon as ever he married, he foreswore liquor, and only occasionally broke out in that direction.

One summer he was taking leave of his family before setting out for the fair at Nizhny, when his wife said to him:

"Ivan Dmitrievitch, do not go to-day. I had such an evil dream about you last night."

But Aksenoff laughed and said:

"Are you afraid, then, that I am going to make too merry at the fair?"

"Nay," she replied, "I hardly know *what* it is I am afraid of. Only, I saw such a dreadful thing in my dream! You were coming home from the town, and as you lifted your cap I could see that your hair had turned grey!"

Aksenoff laughed again.

"So much the better," he said. "See now if I don't drive some prudent bargains there, and bring you home some valuable presents."

And he kissed his family and departed.

Half-way on the road he fell in with another merchant of his acquaintance, and they stopped to spend the night together at an inn. They drank tea, and then went to bed in adjoining rooms. Aksenoff, who was anything but a stay-abed, awoke in the middle of the night, and, since travelling was pleasanter while it was cool, aroused the ostler, and told him to

put his horse in. Then he went into the office, settled up with the landlord, and departed.

After going about forty versts he stopped to bait his horse, and, having refreshed himself with a sleep in the lodge of the inn-yard, went indoors to dine on the verandah. He ordered a *samovar* of tea, laid hands upon a guitar, and proceeded to play it. Suddenly a *troika*[1] hung with bells drove into the courtyard, and from the body of it alighted a *tchinovnik*[2] and two soldiers. The man walked up to Aksenoff and asked him who he was and where he had come from, to which queries Aksenoff duly replied, and then inquired, in his turn, if the *tchinovnik* would care to join him in a *samovar* of tea. The official's only answer was to ply him with further questions—where he had slept last night, was he alone or with a merchant, had he seen the merchant in the morning before he left, why he had started so early, and so on. Aksenoff was a good deal surprised at being examined in this way, but told the official all he knew, and then said:

"Why do you want these particulars? I am neither a thief nor a highwayman, but a merchant travelling on business of my own, and have given no cause for being questioned like this."

The *tchinovnik* merely called the soldiers to him and said:

"I am an *ispravnik*,[3] and the reason I am questioning you is that the merchant in whose company you were last night has had his throat cut. Show me all your things; and do you" (here he turned to the soldiers) "search him."

So Aksenoff was conducted indoors, and his trunk and hand-bag taken from him, opened and searched. Suddenly the *ispravnik* lifted a knife from the bag and cried:

"What is this knife of yours?"

[1] A three-horsed vehicle.
[2] A generic term for all officials in Russia
[3] An inspector of rural police.

Aksenoff stared, and saw that a blood-stained knife had been produced from his baggage. He was simply thunder-struck.

"And how comes there to be blood on the knife?" pursued the *ispravnik*.

Aksenoff tried to answer, but the words stuck in his throat.

"I—I do not know. I—I—that knife—does—does not belong to me at all," he stammered at length; to which the *ispravnik* retorted:

"This morning the merchant was found murdered in his bed, and no one but you could have done it, for the door of the sleeping-hut was locked on the inside, and there was no one in it, besides him, but yourself. Now we find this blood-stained knife in your bag, and, in addition, your face betrays you. Tell me how you murdered this man and how much money you stole from him."

Aksenoff vowed to God that he had not committed the deed, that, as a matter of fact, he had seen nothing of the merchant after taking tea with him, that he had nothing upon his person beyond 8000 roubles of his own, and that the knife was not his. Yet his voice kept breaking, his face was deadly pale, and he shook with fear like a guilty man.

Despite his tears and protestations, the *ispravnik* ordered the soldiers to handcuff him and conduct him outside to the vehicle. All his baggage and money were taken from him, and he was dispatched to gaol in the neighbouring town. Inquiries were made in Vladimir as to his character, and the inhabitants and merchants of the place unanimously testified that, although he had been a free drinker and roisterer from his boyhood up, he was nevertheless a most respectable man. Then the trial came on, and in the end he was convicted both of the murder and of stealing 20,000 roubles.

His wife was distracted about her husband, and hardly knew what to think about the affair. Nevertheless, although her children were all of them young

—one, indeed, being still at the breast—she set off with them to the town where her husband was confined. At first she could not obtain permission to see him, but after petitioning the superior authorities, she was at length admitted to the prison. As soon as she caught sight of him dressed in prison clothes, fettered, and surrounded by criminals, she fell to the floor in a faint, and it was a long time before she recovered. Then she gathered her children about her, sat down with them by her husband's side, and began to tell him of domestic matters and to ask him about all that had happened to him. When he had told her she said:

"And what ought we to do now?"

"We must petition the Tsar," he replied. "They cannot let an innocent man suffer."

Then she broke it to him that she had already done so, and that the petition had been rejected. He said nothing, but sat looking at the floor. She went on:

"So, you see, it was not for nothing that I saw in my dream that your hair had turned grey. It is growing a little so already with your troubles. Ah, if only you had not gone that day!"

Then she began to stroke his hair as she added:

"My own darling Ivan, tell me, your wife, the truth. You did this deed, did you not?"

"That *you* should ever have thought it of me!" was all that Aksenoff could say as he covered his face with his hands and burst into tears. At that moment a soldier entered and said that it was time for the wife and her children to leave. So, for the last time, Aksenoff parted with his family.

When she had gone Aksenoff began to think over their conversation; and when he remembered that even his wife had thought him guilty and had actually asked him whether he had not murdered the merchant he said to himself:

"It is clear that God alone knows the truth. To Him only must I pray, and from Him only expect mercy."

And from that moment Aksenoff abandoned all hope or thought of further petitions, and prayed only to God.

He had been sentenced to the knout and penal servitude, and the sentence was duly carried out. First he was flogged, and then, when the wounds from the knout had healed, he was dispatched with other convicts to Siberia.

In Siberia he lived in penal servitude for twenty-six years. The hair of his head turned as white as snow, and his beard grew long, straight, and grizzled. All his old cheerfulness left him, and he became bent, taciturn, and grave—yet constant always in his prayers to God.

In prison he learnt to make boots, and with the money thus earned he bought a Testament, and read it whenever there was sufficient light in the prison; while on feast days he went to the prison church, read the Gospel there, and sang in the choir, for his voice was still good. The authorities liked him for his quiet demeanour, while his prison comrades respected him so much that they called him "*Diediushka*"[1] and "the man of God." Whenever petitions were being drawn up in the prison his comrades always sent Aksenoff with them to the authorities, and whenever quarrels were afoot among the convicts they always appealed to him to settle them.

No one ever wrote to Aksenoff from home, so that he had no means of knowing whether his wife and children were alive or dead.

One day a batch of new convicts arrived at the prison, and in the evening the old prisoners gathered around the latest arrivals to ask them who they were, what town or village they had come from, and for what offences. Aksenoff likewise came and sat down upon a pallet near the newcomers, and listened, with his eyes upon the floor, to what one or another of the prisoners might be saying. One convict in particular—a tall, vigorous old man of sixty, with a grey, close-

[1] An endearing diminutive of "Diedd" ("Grandfather").

cropped beard—was relating the story of the offence for which he was arrested.

"So, my friends," he said, "you see that I have been sent here for nothing. All that I did was to take a post-boy's horse out of a sledge in an inn-yard. They arrested me, saying that I had stolen it. Of course I told them that my only object in taking the horse was to arrive the quicker at my journey's end, after which I should have returned it; yet they said, 'No, you have stolen it'—and that, too, without so much as knowing at the time where or how I had 'stolen' it! Well, I was tried, and, if only they could have got the necessary evidence, should have been here long ago. But they couldn't, so they packed me off contrary to the law. Ah, well," he added, "I have been in Siberia before—and didn't make a long stay there either."

"Where do you come from?" asked one of the other prisoners.

"From Vladimir, where I was a registered burgher. My name is Makar, and my surname Semenovitch."

Aksenoff raised his head at this, and asked him:

"Did you ever hear, in Vladimir, of some merchants called Aksenoff? Are they still alive?"

"How could I *not* hear of them? They are well-to-do people, although, unfortunately, their father is in Siberia. He is in the same plight as ourselves, in fact. But you—what was *your* crime?"

Aksenoff was not fond of talking about his own troubles, so he only sighed and said:

"I, for my sins, have now lived in penal servitude for twenty-six years."

"But for *what* sins?" pursued Makar.

"For sins that earned me *this*," replied Aksenoff, and would say no more. His comrades, however, went on to tell Makar the story of a merchant being murdered while travelling, of the knife being planted upon Aksenoff, and of the latter's wrongful conviction for the deed.

When Makar heard this he stared at Akensoff, clapped his hands to his knees, and exclaimed:

"Wonderful! Wonderful! But it has aged you, little father, a good deal."

Yet, when asked what had surprised him so, and whether he had ever seen Aksenoff before, he would not answer, but merely said:

"It is marvellous, my friends, what meetings take place in this world."

Immediately the idea occurred to Aksenoff that possibly this man might know who had been the actual murderer. So he said:

"Did you ever hear of this affair before, Semenovitch, or see me before?"

"Did I ever hear of it before indeed? Why, the world rang with it at the time. Still, it all happened a long while ago, and if I heard much of it then, I have forgotten much of it now."

"But did you ever chance to hear who really murdered the merchant?" pursued Aksenoff.

Makar smiled as he said:

"The man who murdered him must have been the man in whose bag the knife was found. If someone had planted the knife on you, you would not have been arrested (as you were) for the robbery as well. Besides, to plant the knife on you, the murderer would have had to stand by your very bedside, would he not?—in which case you would have heard him."

As soon as Makar said this, Aksenoff began to suspect that Makar himself had been the actual murderer. He got up and moved away. All that night he could not sleep. Restlessness had him in its grip, and he began making mental pictures of the past. First there presented herself to his vision his wife, looking just as she had done when she saw him off for the last time to the fair. He could see her before him as though actually alive—could see her eyes and face, could hear her laughing and talking to him. Then he saw his children as they had been in those days—little things, one of them in a tiny fur jacket, and the

youngest one sucking at its mother's breast. Next he pictured himself as he was then—young and high-spirited. He remembered sitting on the verandah and playing the guitar in the inn where he had been arrested. How light-hearted he was then! Next he went on to recall the place of execution where he had been flogged, the executioner, the crowd gathered around, the fetters, the other convicts, all his twenty-six years' life in prison, his old age. And such a spasm of despair shook him that he almost laid hands upon himself.

"And all because of that villain yonder," he thought to himself. Indeed, at that moment, his rage against Makar Semenovitch could almost have driven him to fall upon the man and avenge himself for ever. The whole night long he recited his prayers, yet that could not calm him. Next day he never went near Makar nor looked at him.

Two more weeks passed. Aksenoff could not sleep at nights, and such restlessness would come upon him that he hardly knew what to do with himself. One night he was roaming about the prison when he saw some earth being thrown out from under one of the pallets. He stopped to look. Suddenly Makar Semenovitch leapt from beneath the bed and glared at him with a terrified air. Aksenoff was about to pass on, to avoid looking at him, when Makar seized him by the arm, and told him that he was digging a passage under the walls. The earth, he said, he conveyed outside each day in his boot-tops, and got rid of it on the roadway as they were being marched to work.

"Say nothing about this," he went on, "and I will take you with me; but if, on the other hand, you inform—well, I will never let you go until I have killed you."

As Aksenoff looked upon the man who had wronged him so terribly his whole form trembled with rage. He withdrew his arm from the other's grasp and said:

"I have nothing to gain by escaping, nor could you

kill me again. You did that long ago. As to whether or no I inform against you, that will be as God may put it into my heart."

Next day, when the prisoners were being marched to work, some soldiers noticed that Makar Semenovitch was strewing earth upon the ground.[1] This led to the prison being searched and the hole discovered. The Governor arrived, and began to question every man in turn, in the hope of finding out who had made the hole. All of them denied it. Those who knew the truth would not betray Makar, since they knew that for such an offence as that he would be nearly flogged to death. Then the Governor turned to Aksenoff. He knew that Aksenoff was a truthful man, and therefore said:

"Old man, you are one of those who speak the truth. Tell me now, before God, who did this thing."

Makar was standing by, looking as if he had had nothing to do with it; yet he kept his eyes fixed upon the Governor, and never glanced at Aksenoff. Aksenoff's hands and lips were trembling, and it was some time before he could get a word out. All the while he was thinking to himself:

"If I shield him, I shall be pardoning the man who ruined me. Why should I do that? Let him pay at last for all my suffering. Yet, if I denounce him, it means that he will be flogged. What, too, if my suspicions of him should be wrong? And, in any case, should I feel any the easier after it?"

The Governor spoke again. "Tell me the truth, old man," he said. "Who dug this hole?"

Aksenoff looked for a moment at Makar and answered:

"I cannot tell you, your Excellency. God does not bid me do so, so I will not. Do with me as you please. I am in your power."

And, in spite of all the Governor's threats,

[1] That being so, the reader may wonder how what follows ever came to take place; yet Tolstoi does not explain.—TRANSLATOR.

Aksenoff would say nothing more; so that they never discovered who had dug the hole.

The same night, as Aksenoff was lying on his pallet, half-asleep and half-awake, he heard someone approach him and sit down at the foot of the bed. He peered through the darkness and recognized Makar.

"What more do you want with me?" he said. "Why are you there at all?"

Makar returned no answer, so Aksenoff raised himself a little and repeated:

"What do you want? Away with you, or I will call the soldiers!"

Then Makar leant over towards him and said in a whisper:

"Ivan Dmitrievitch, pardon me!"

"Pardon you for what?" asked Aksenoff.

"Because it was I who murdered the merchant and then planted the knife on you. I meant to murder you too, but a noise arose in the courtyard, and I thrust the knife into your bag and escaped out of the window again."

Aksenoff said nothing, for, indeed, he knew not what to say. Presently Makar slipped from the pallet, crouched on the floor, and went on:

"Ivan Dmitrievitch, pardon me, pardon me, for the love of God! I am going to confess to the murder of the merchant, and then they will pardon you and let you go home."

But Aksenoff answered:

"It were easy enough for you to speak, yet what could I suffer more? Moreover, where could I go? My wife is dead, and my children will have forgotten me. I should have nowhere for the sole of my foot to rest."

Still crouching upon the floor, Makar beat his head against it as he repeated:

"Ivan Dmitrievitch, pardon me, pardon me! Even if I had been knouted, the blows would not have hurt me as does the sight of you now. To think

that you could still have compassion upon me—and would not say—! Pardon me, for Christ's sake, abandoned villain though I am!"—and he burst into tears.

When Aksenoff heard Makar weeping he too wept and said:

"May God pardon you! It may be that I am a hundred times worse than you."

And on the instant his heart grew lighter. He ceased to yearn for home, and felt as if he never wished to leave the prison. All that he thought of henceforth was his latter end.

Nevertheless, in spite of what Aksenoff had said, Makar confessed to the murder. Yet, when the official order came for Aksenoff to return home, he had passed to the last home of all.

HOW THE LITTLE DEVIL ATONED FOR THE CRUST OF BREAD

A POOR peasant went out to plough. He had had no breakfast, and took with him only a crust of bread for dinner. He canted the plough over, unfastened the sheeting, laid it under a bush, placed the crust on the top of it, and covered the whole over with his coat.

By-and-by the horse grew tired and the man hungry, so he stuck the nose of the plough into the soil, unhitched the horse, turned it loose to graze, and went to his coat to get his dinner. He lifted up the coat—but, behold! no crust of bread! He searched and searched about, turned the coat over and shook it—and yet no crust. He was greatly astonished. It seemed such a strange thing.

"I never saw anyone go and take it," he said to himself. Yet, as a matter of fact, a little devil had snatched the crust away while the peasant was ploughing, and sat himself down behind the bush to enjoy hearing the peasant curse and swear at his loss.

The peasant was greatly disappointed, yet all he said was: "Well, I shan't die of hunger. Whoever took the crust must have needed it, so let him eat it and good luck to him!"

Then he went to the well, had a drink of water, and rested himself. After that he caught his horse, reyoked it to the plough, and started ploughing again. The little devil was greatly put out at not having led the peasant into sin, and hied him off to Hell to see the Chief Devil and tell him how he had carried off the peasant's crust with no better results than to hear the peasant bless the thief. The Chief Devil was greatly annoyed.

"If," said he, "the peasant worsted you in this affair it must have been your own fault entirely. You cannot have gone the right way about it. It will be

a bad look-out for us indeed if first the peasants, and then their old women, adopt this non-swearing habit. We shall not be able to live at all. Well, the matter must not be left where it is. Go you up again," he said, " and restore to the peasant his crust of bread: and if within three years from this date you have not got the better of him somehow, I will souse you in holy water."

Terrified by the bare mention of holy water, the little devil scurried back to earth, where he fell to thinking how he could best expiate his fault. He thought and thought, and at last hit upon a plan. He assumed the outward appearance of a pilgrim, and entered the service of the peasant as a labourer. He taught him first to provide against a dry summer by sowing his seed in a swamp, so that when all the other peasants' crops were being burnt up by the sun our poor peasant's corn was still growing tall and thick and its ears bursting with grain. Indeed, the peasant lived upon that store of grain until the next season, and yet had plenty to spare. The next summer the " pilgrim " advised the poor peasant to sow his crop on high ground. It turned out to be a very rainy season, and while the other peasants' corn became flooded or mildewed and never ripened, our peasant's crop on the hill was a splendid one, and he was left with more grain than he either needed or knew what to do with.

Then the " pilgrim " induced the peasant to waste his grain by distilling *vodka* from it. First he distilled the liquor, and then he drank it, and then he treated others to it. The little devil lost no time in repairing to his principal and bragging to him that he had now atoned for the matter of that crust of bread. So the Chief Devil went up to look.

Arrived at the peasant's homestead, he found that the owner had invited some rich peasants into the hut, and was about to regale them with *vodka*, which the goodwife was preparing to take round. Just as she started to do so, however, she caught her foot

against the table and upset a glassful. The peasant flew into a rage, and rated his wife soundly.

"Hi!" he said. "What a slop you have made! To think of spilling all that good stuff upon the floor, you clumsy-footed fool!"

The little devil nudged his superior. "Please note," he said, "that it is not exactly crusts of bread that he is regretting now."

Having chidden his wife, the peasant started to take round the *vodka* himself. At this moment there entered the hut a poor labourer, returned from work. He entered uninvited, but nevertheless sat down and greeted the company; until, suddenly perceiving that the guests were drinking *vodka*, he began to long for a drink too, for he was very tired. There he sat and sat, with his mouth watering and watering—yet the goodwife brought him nothing, and he could only sit muttering under his breath: "My word, but they take good care to keep it all to themselves!"

The Chief Devil was pleased enough with this, so far as it went, but his subordinate said proudly: "Wait a little, and you will see something better."

So the rich peasants drank their first glassful of *vodka*, and their host did the same. Then they began to catch hold of and flatter one another, and to speak smooth, oily words.

The Chief Devil listened attentively, and commended this too. "If," said he, "they can get so foxy on this one glassful apiece, they will soon go on to cheating one another—and then we have the lot of them!"

"Yes, but wait and see what is to come next," said the little devil. "You will see it, right enough, after they have drunk their next glassful. At present they are curling their brushes over their backs like foxes, and trying to get the better of one another; but see what truly wolfish brutes they will become presently."

So the peasants had another glassful each, and their talk grew more noisy and less civil. In place of oily

speeches they began to utter curses and threats, as well as to strike one another and tweak one another's noses. Their host too joined in the quarrel, and got set upon by the rest.

The Chief Devil beheld this with delight. "It is altogether excellent!" he cried. But the little devil answered: "Wait until they have had their third glassful. At present they are like angry wolves: but only give them time—only let them drink a third glassful—and you will see them become sheer pigs."

So the peasants had a third glassful all round, and grew completely fuddled. They clamoured and shouted, without either knowing what they said themselves or listening to what their companions were saying. Finally, they all left the hut, and went their several ways—some singly, some in twos, some in threes, and all of them rolling about the roadway as they walked. Their host stepped outside to speed the parting guests, and immediately fell flat on his nose in a puddle. Splashed from head to foot, he lay there like a wild boar and grunted. The Chief Devil was now in absolute raptures.

"This was a most splendid scheme you invented," he exclaimed to the little devil. "You have more than atoned for that crust of bread. But tell me now—How did you make this liquor? I take it your first ingredient was fox's blood, to make the peasant grow cunning; your next, wolf's blood, to make him grow cruel; and your third, swine's blood, to make him grow into a pig?"

"Not at all," rejoined the little devil. "The recipe I used was quite a different one. I merely made the peasant grow too much corn. That was all. You see, the right stuff (that is to say, the blood of wild beasts) was in him already—is always in him, in fact—only it had no outlet so long as he grew corn merely for food. There was a time, you may remember, when he did not even repine over the loss of his only crust; yet he had no sooner come to possess a surplus of grain than he came also to cast about

how to divert himself. Then *I* stepped in—stepped in and taught him a new diversion—namely, drinking; with the result that, as soon as ever he had distilled God's gift into idle liquor, there arose in him both the fox's blood and the wolf's and the pig's. And now that he has once tasted liquor, he will remain a beast for ever."

The Chief Devil congratulated the little one warmly, pardoned him for the crust of bread, and awarded him promotion in the hierarchy of devils.

THE PENITENT SINNER

ONCE upon a time a man lived in the world for seventy years, and lived all his life in sin. Then this man fell sick, but did not repent—except that, when death came to him in the last hour of all, he burst into tears and cried: "O Lord, pardon me as Thou didst the thief upon the cross." That was all he had time to say before his soul departed. Yet the soul of that sinner loved God, and trusted in His mercy, and thus it came to the doors of Paradise.

And the sinner began to knock thereat and beseech admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven. Then he heard a voice from within the doors saying: "What manner of man is this who is knocking at the doors of Paradise, and what deeds hath he performed during his lifetime?"

Then the voice of the Accuser answered, and recounted all the sinful deeds of the man, and named no good ones at all.

Thereupon the voice from within the doors spoke again. "Sinners," it said, "may not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Depart thou hence."

And the man cried: "O Judge, thy voice I hear, but thy face I cannot see, and thy name I do not know."

And the voice answered: "I am Peter the Apostle."

Then said the sinner: "Have compassion upon me, O Peter the Apostle, and remember the weakness of men and the mercy of God. Wert thou not a disciple of Christ, and didst thou not hear from His own lips His teaching, and didst thou not behold the example of His life? Dost thou not remember also the time when He was in agony of soul and did thrice ask of thee why thou didst sleep and not pray, and yet thou didst sleep, for thine eyes were heavy, and thrice He found thee sleeping?"

"Dost thou not remember also how thou didst promise Him that thou wouldst not deny Him unto death, and yet how thou didst thrice deny Him when He was brought before Caiaphas? Thus hath it been with me."

"Dost thou not remember also how the cock did crow, and thou didst go out and weep bitterly? Thus hath it been with me. Thou canst not deny me admittance."

But the voice from within the doors of Paradise was silent.

Then, after waiting a little while, the sinner began once more to beseech admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven. Thereupon a second voice was heard from within the doors and said: "Who is this man, and in what manner hath he lived in the world?"

The voice of the Accuser answered, and once more recited all the evil deeds of the sinner, and named no good ones.

Thereupon the voice answered from within the doors: "Depart thou hence. Sinners such as thou may not live with us in Paradise."

But the sinner cried: "O Judge, thy voice I hear, but thy face I cannot see, and thy name I do not know."

Then the voice said to him: "I am King David the Prophet." Yet the sinner would not desist nor leave the doors, but cried again:

"Have compassion on me, O King David, and remember the weakness of men and the mercy of God. God loved thee and exalted thee above thy fellows. Thou hadst all things—a kingdom, glory, riches, wives, and children—yet didst thou look from thy roof upon the wife of a poor man, and sin did enter into thee, and thou didst take the wife of Uriah, and didst slay Uriah himself with the sword of the Ammonites. Thou, the rich man, didst take from the poor man his one ewe lamb, and didst put the man himself to death. Thus also hath it been with me."

"But dost thou not remember also how thou didst

repent and say—'I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sins are ever before me'? Thus is it with me now. Thou canst not deny me admittance."

But the voice from within the doors of Paradise was silent.

Then, after waiting a little while, the sinner began once more to knock and beseech admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thereupon a third voice was heard from within the doors and said: "Who is this man, and in what manner hath he lived in the world?"

And the voice of the Accuser answered, and for the third time recited the evil deeds of the man, and named no good ones.

Then the voice spoke again from within the doors. "Depart thou thence," it said. "Sinners may not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

But the sinner cried: "O Judge, thy voice I hear, but thy face I cannot see, and thy name I do not know."

And the voice answered: "I am John the Divine, the disciple whom Jesus loved."

Then the sinner rejoiced and said: "Now canst thou not deny me admittance. Peter and David might have let me in because they know the weakness of men and the mercy of God: but thou wilt let me in because in thee there is abounding love. Didst not thou, O John the Divine, write in thy book that God is Love, and that whoso loveth not, the same knoweth not God? Didst not thou in thy old age give to men this saying—'Brethren, love one another'? How, therefore, canst thou hate me or drive me hence? Either must thou love me and yield me admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven, or thou must deny what thou thyself hast said."

Then the doors of Paradise were opened, and John received the penitent sinner, and admitted him to the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE SNOW-STORM[1]

Translated by Constance Garnett

I

It was past six o'clock in the evening, after drinking tea, that I set out from a posting-station, the name of which I have forgotten, though I remember that it was somewhere in the Don Cossack district, near Novotcherkask. It was quite dark as I wrapped myself in my fur cloak and fur rug and settled myself beside Alyoshka in the sledge. Under the lee of the station-house it seemed warm and still. Though there was no snow falling, there was not a star to be seen overhead, and the sky seemed extraordinarily low and black in contrast with the pure, snowy plain stretched out before us.

As soon as we had driven out of the village, passing the dark figures of some windmills, one of which was clumsily waving its great sails, I noticed that the road was heavier and thicker with snow, and the wind began to blow more keenly on my left, tossed the horses' tails and manes on one side, and persistently lifted and blew away the snow as it was stirred up by the sledge-runners and the horses' hoofs. The tinkle of the bell died away, a draught of cold air made its way through some aperture in my sleeve and blew down my back, and I recalled the advice of the overseer of the station that I should do better not to start that night, or I might be out all night and get frozen on the way.

"Don't you think we might get lost?" I said to the driver. But receiving no reply, I put the question more definitely, "What do you say, shall we reach the next station? Shan't we lose the way?"

"God knows," he answered, without turning his

[1] This story is printed by the kind permission of Mr W. Heinemann.

head. "How it drives along the ground! Can't see the road a bit. Lord, 'a' mercy!"

"Well, but you tell me, do you expect to get to the next station or not?" I persisted in inquiring. "Shall we manage to get there?"

"We've got to get there," said the driver, and he said something more which I could not catch in the wind.

I did not want to turn back; but to spend the night driving in the frost and the snow-storm about the absolutely desolate steppe of that part of the Don Cossack district was a very cheerless prospect. And although in the dark I could not see my driver distinctly, I somehow did not take to him, and felt no confidence in him. He was sitting with his legs hanging down before him exactly in the middle of his seat instead of on one side. His voice sounded listless; he wore a big hat with a wavering brim, not a coachman's cap, and besides he did not drive in correct style, but held the reins in both hands, like a footman who has taken the coachman's place on the box. And what prejudiced me most of all was that he had tied a kerchief over his ears. In short, the serious, bent back before my eyes impressed me unfavourably and seemed to promise no good.

"Well, I think it would be better to turn back," said Alyoshka; "it's poor fun being lost."

"Lord, 'a' mercy! how the snow is flying; no chance of seeing the road; one's eyes choked up entirely. . . . Lord, 'a' mercy!" grumbled the driver.

We had not driven on another quarter of an hour, when the driver, pulling up the horses, handed the reins to Alyoshka, clumsily extricated his legs from the box, and walked off to look for the road, his big boots crunching in the snow.

"Where are you going? Are we off the road, eh?" I inquired, but the driver did not answer. Turning his head to avoid the wind, which was cutting straight in his face, he walked away from the sledge.

"Well, found it?" I questioned him again, when he had come back.

"No, nothing," he said with sudden impatience and annoyance, as though I were to blame for his having got off the road, and deliberately tucking his big feet back again under the box, he picked up the reins with his frozen gloves.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, as we started again.

"What are we to do? Go whither God leads us."

And we drove on at the same slow trot, unmistakably on no sort of road; at one moment in snow that was soft and deep, and the next over brittle, bare ice.

Although it was so cold, the snow on my fur collar melted very quickly; the drifting snow blew more and more thickly near the ground, and a few flakes of frozen snow began falling overhead.

It was evident that we were going astray, because after driving another quarter of an hour we had not seen a single verst post.

"Come, what do you think," I asked the driver again, "can we manage to get to the station?"

"To which station? . . . We shall get back all right if we let the horses go as they please, they'll take us there; but I doubt our getting to the other station; only lose our lives, may be."

"Well, then let us go back," said I. "And really. . . ."

"Turn back then?" repeated the driver.

"Yes, yes, turn back!"

The driver let the reins go. The horses went at a better pace, and though I did not notice that we turned round, the wind changed and soon the mills could be seen through the snow. The driver plucked up his spirits and began talking. "The other day they were driving back from the next station like this in a snow-storm," said he, "and they spent the night in some stacks and only arrived next morning. And a good job they did get into the stacks, or they'd have

all been clean frozen to death—it was a frost. As it was, one had his feet frost-bitten; and he died of it three weeks after."

"But now it's not so cold and the wind seems dropping," said I; "couldn't we manage it?"

"Warmer it may be, but the snow's drifting just the same. Now it's behind us, so it seems a bit quieter, but it's blowing hard. We might have to go if we'd the mail or anything; but it's a different matter going of our own accord; it's no joke to let one's fare freeze. What if I've to answer for your honour afterwards?"

II

At that moment we heard the bells of several sledges behind us, overtaking us at a smart pace.

"It's the mail express bell," said my driver; "there's only one like that at the station."

And certainly the bells of the foremost sledge were particularly fine; their clear, rich, mellow and somewhat jangled notes reached us distinctly on the wind. As I learned afterwards, it was a set of bells such as sportsmen have on their sledges—three bells, a big one in the middle, with a "raspberry note," as it is called, and two little bells pitched at the interval of a third up and down the scale. The cadence of these thirds and the jangling fifth ringing in the air was uncommonly striking and strangely sweet in the desolate dumb steppe.

"It's the post," said my driver, when the foremost of the three sledges was level with us. "How's the road, can one get along?" he shouted to the hindmost of the drivers; but the latter only shouted to his horses without answering him.

The music of the bells quickly died away in the wind as soon as the post had passed us. I suppose my driver felt ashamed.

"Suppose we go on, sir!" he said to me; "folks

have driven along the road, and now their tracks will be fresh."

I assented and we turned, facing the wind again, and pushing on through the deep snow. I watched the road at the side, that we might not go off the tracks made by the sledges. For two versts their track was distinctly visible; then only a slight unevenness could be detected below the runners, and soon I was utterly unable to say whether there was a track or simply a crease blown by the wind in the snow. My eyes were dazed by watching the snow flying monotonously by under our runners, and I began looking straight before me. The third verst post we saw, but the fourth we could not find; just as before we drove against the wind and with the wind, to the right and to the left, and at last things came to such a pass that the driver said we were too much to the right; I said too much to the left; and Alyoshka maintained that we were going straight back. Again we pulled up several times, and the driver extricated his long legs and clambered out to seek the road, but always in vain. I, too, got out once to see whether something I fancied I descried might not be the road. But scarcely had I struggled six steps against the wind and satisfied myself that there was nothing but regular, uniform white drifts of snow everywhere, and that I had seen the road only in imagination, when I lost sight of the sledge. I shouted "Driver! Alyoshka!" but my voice I felt was caught up by the wind out of my very mouth and in one second carried far away from me. I went in the direction where the sledge had been—there was no sledge there. I went to the right, it was not there. I am ashamed when I remember the loud, shrill, almost despairing, voice in which I shouted once more, "Driver!" when he was only a couple of paces from me. His black figure, with his whip and his huge hat flapping down on one side, suddenly started up before me. He led me to the sledge.

"We must be thankful, too, that it's warm," said

he; "if the frost gets sharp, it's a bad look-out. . . . Lord, 'a' mercy!"

"Let the horses go, let them take us back," I said, settling myself in the sledge. "They'll take us back, driver, eh?"

"They ought to."

He put down the reins, gave the shaft horse three strokes about the pad with his whip, and we started off again. We drove for another half-hour. All at once we heard ahead of us bells, which I recognised as the sportsman's set of bells, and two others. But this time the bells were coming to meet us. The same three sledges, having delivered the post, were returning to their station with their change of horses tied on behind. The three stalwart horses of the express sledge with the sporting bells galloped swiftly in front. There was only one driver in it. He was sitting on the box-seat, shouting briskly and frequently to his horses. Behind, in the inside of the emptied sledge, there were a couple of drivers; we could hear their loud, cheerful talk. One of them was smoking a pipe, and its spark, glowing in the wind, lighted up part of his face. Looking at them I felt ashamed of having been afraid to go on, and my driver must have had the same feeling, for with one voice we said, "Let us follow them."

III

Without waiting for the hindmost sledge to get by, my driver began turning awkwardly and ran his shafts into the horses tied on at the back of it. One team of three started aside, broke their rein, and galloped away.

"Ah, the cross-eyed devil doesn't see where he's turning to — right into people! . . . The devil!" scolded a short driver in a husky, cracked voice—an old man, as I inferred from his voice and figure. He jumped nimbly out of the hindmost sledge and ran

after the horses, still keeping up his coarse and cruel abuse of my driver.

But the horses would not let themselves be caught. The old man ran after them, and in one moment horses and man vanished in the white darkness of the snow-storm.

"Vassily—y! give us the bay here; there's no catching them like this," he heard his voice again.

One of the drivers, a very tall man, got out of the sledge, unyoked his three horses, pulled himself up by the head on to one of them, and crunching over the snow at a shuffling gallop vanished in the same direction.

In company with the two other sledges we pushed on without a road, following the express sledge, which ran ahead at full gallop with its ringing bells.

"What! he catch them!" said my driver, referring to the man who had run to catch the horses. "If it won't join the other horses of itself—it's a vicious beast—it'll lead him a fine dance, and he won't catch it."

From the time that he turned back, my driver seemed in better spirits and was more conversational, and as I was not sleepy I did not fail of course to take advantage of it. I began asking him where he came from, how he came here, and what he was; and soon learned that he was from my province, a Tula man, a serf from the village of Kirpitchny, that they had too little land, and that the corn had given up yielding any crop at all ever since the cholera year. There were two brothers at home, a third had gone for a soldier; they hadn't bread enough to last till Christmas, and lived on what they could earn. His younger brother, he told me, was the head of the house because he was married, while he himself was a widower. Every year gangs of men from his village came here as drivers, though he hadn't himself ever been a driver before; but now he had gone into the posting service so as to be a help to his brother. That he earned, thank God, one hundred and twenty roubles

a year here, and sent a hundred of them home, and that it would be a pleasant life, too, "but the mail men were a brutal lot, very, and, indeed, all the people in these parts were a rough lot."

"Now, why did that driver abuse me? Lord, 'a' mercy on us! Did I set the horses loose on purpose? Am I a man to do anyone a mischief? And what did he gallop after them for? They'd have got home by themselves. He's only wearing out his horses, and he'll be lost himself too," repeated the God-fearing peasant.

"And what's that blackness?" I asked, noticing several black objects ahead of us.

"Why, a train of waggons. That's a pleasant way of travelling!" he went on, as we overtook the huge waggons on wheels, covered with hemp sacking, following one another. "Look, not a man to be seen —they're all asleep. The clever mare knows the way of herself, there's no making her stray off the road. . . . I've driven with a train of waggons too," he added, "so I know."

Truly it was strange to look at those huge waggons, covered with snow from their sacking top down to the wheels, moving along quite alone. But in the corner of the foremost the snow-covered sacking was lifted a little on two fingers, and a cap emerged from it for an instant when our bells were ringing close to the waggons. The big, piebald horse, stretching its neck and dragging with its back, stepped evenly along the completely buried road, and rhythmically shook its shaggy head under the whitened yoke. It pricked up one snowy ear as we came up to it.

After we had driven on another half-hour, my driver addressed me again.

"Well, what do you think, sir, are we going right?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"The wind was this way, sir, before, but now we're going with our backs to the weather. No, we're not going the right way, we're astray again," he concluded with complete serenity.

It was clear that though he was very timorous, even death, as they say, is pleasant in company; he had become perfectly composed since we were a large party, and he had not to be the guide and responsible person. With great coolness he made observations on the mistakes of the driver of the foremost sledge, as though he had not the slightest interest in the matter. I did notice, indeed, that the foremost sledge was sometimes visible in profile on my left, sometimes on the right; it positively seemed to me as though we were going round in a very small space. This might, however, have been an illusion of the senses, just as sometimes it looked to me as though the first sledge were driving up-hill, or along a slope, or downhill, though the steppe was everywhere level.

We had driven on a good while longer, when I discerned—far away, it seemed to me, on the very horizon—a long black moving streak. But a minute later it was evident to me that this was the same train of waggons we had overtaken before. Just as before, the snow lay on the creaking wheels, some of which did not turn at all, indeed. As before, all the men were asleep under the sacking covers, and as before, the piebald horse in front, with inflated nostrils, sniffed out the road and pricked up its ears.

"There, we've gone round and round, and we've come back to the same waggons again!" said my driver in a tone of dissatisfaction. "The mail horses are good ones, and so he can drive them in this mad way; but ours will come to a dead stop if we go on like this all night."

He cleared his throat.

"Let us turn back, sir, before we come to harm."

"What for? Why, we shall get somewhere."

"Get somewhere! Why, we shall spend the night on the steppe. How the snow does blow! . . Lord, 'a' mercy on us!"

Though I was surprised that the foremost driver, who had obviously lost both the road and the direc-

tion, did not attempt to look for the road, but calling merrily to his horses drove on still at full trot, I did not feel inclined now to drop behind the other sledges.

"Follow them!" I said.

My driver went on, but he drove the horses now with less eagerness than before, and he did not address another syllable to me.

IV

The storm became more and more violent, and fine frozen snow was falling from the sky. It seemed as though it were beginning to freeze; my nose and cheeks felt the cold more keenly; more often a draught of cold air crept in under my fur cloak, and I had to wrap myself up more closely. From time to time the sledge jolted over a bare, broken crust of ice where the snow had blown away. Though I was much interested in seeing how our wanderings would end, yet, as I had been travelling six hundred versts without stopping for a night, I could not help shutting my eyes and I dropped into a doze. Once when I opened my eyes, I was struck by what seemed to me for the first minute the bright light shed over the white plain. The horizon had grown noticeably wider; the black, lowering sky had suddenly vanished; on all sides one could see the white, slanting lines of falling snow; the outlines of the horses of the front sledge were more distinctly visible, and when I looked upwards it seemed to me for the first minute that the storm-clouds had parted and that only the falling snow hid the sky. While I had been dozing, the moon had risen and cast its cold, bright light through the thin clouds and falling snow. All that I could see distinctly was my own sledge with the horse and driver and the three sledges with their horses ahead of us. In the first, the mail sledge, the one driver still sat on the box driving his horses at a smart trot. In the second there were two men, who, letting go their reins and making themselves

a shelter out of a cloak, were all the time smoking a pipe, as we could see from the gleaming sparks. In the third sledge no one was to be seen; the driver was presumably asleep in the middle of it. The driver in front had, when I waked, begun stopping his horses and looking for the road. Then, as soon as we stopped the howling of the wind became more audible, and the astoundingly immense mass of snow driving in the air was more evident to me. I could see in the moonlight, veiled by the drifting snow, the short figure of the driver holding a big whip with which he was trying the snow in front of him. He moved backwards and forwards in the white darkness, came back to the sledge again, jumped sideways on the front seat, and again through the monotonous whistling of the wind we could hear his jaunty, musical calling to his horses and the ringing of the bells. Every time that the front driver got out to search for signs of the road or of stacks, a brisk self-confident voice from the second sledge shouted to him:

"I say, Ignashka, we've gone right off to the left! Keep more to the right, away from the storm." Or, "Why do you go round and round like a fool? Go the way of the snow, you'll get there all right." Or, "To the right, go on to the right, my lad! See, there's something black—a verst post may be." Or, "What are you pottering about for? Unyoke the piebald and let him go first; he'll bring you on the road in a trice. That'll be the best plan."

The man who gave this advice did not himself unyoke the trace-horse, nor get out into the snow to look for the road; he did not so much as poke his nose out beyond the shelter of the cloak, and when Ignashka, in reply to one of his counsels, shouted to him that he'd better ride on in front himself as he knew which way to go, the giver of good advice answered that, if he were driving the mail horses, he would ride on and would soon bring them on to the road. "But our horses won't lead the way in a storm!" he shouted; "they're not that sort!"

"Don't meddle then!" answered Ignashka whistling merrily to his horses.

The other driver, sitting in the same sledge as the counsellor, said nothing to Ignashka, and refrained altogether from taking part in the proceedings, though he was not yet asleep, as I concluded from his still glowing pipe, and from the fact that when we stopped I heard his regular, continuous talk. He was telling a tale. Only once, when Ignashka stopped for the sixth or seventh time, apparently vexed at the interruption in his enjoyment of the drive, he shouted to him:

"Why, what are you stopping again for? Trying to find the road, indeed! Don't you see, there's a snow-storm! The land-surveyor himself couldn't find the road now! you should drive on as long as the horses will go. We shan't freeze to death, I don't suppose. . . . Do go on!"

"I daresay! A postilion was frozen to death last year, sure enough!" my driver retorted.

The man in the third sledge did not wake up all the time. Only once, while we were halting, the counsellor shouted:

"Filip, ay . . . Filip!" And receiving no reply, he remarked, "I say, he's not frozen, is he? . . . You'd better look, Ignashka."

Ignashka, who did everything, went up to the sledge and began to poke the sleeper.

"I say, one drink has done for him. If you're frozen, just say so!" he said, shaking him.

The sleeping man muttered some words of abuse.

"Alive, lads!" said Ignashka, and he ran ahead again, and again we drove on, and so fast indeed that the little sorrel trace-horse of my sledge, who was constantly being lashed about its tail, more than once broke into a clumsy gallop.

V

It was, I think, about midnight when the old man and Vassily, who had gone in pursuit of the strayed horses, rode up to us. They had caught the horses, and found and overtook us. But how they managed to do this in the dark, blinding blizzard, across the bare steppe, has always remained a mystery to me. The old man, with his elbows and legs jogging, trotted up on the shaft-horse (the other two horses were fastened to the yoke; horses cannot be left loose in a blizzard). On overtaking us, he began railing at my driver again.

"You see, you cross-eyed devil, what a . . ."

"Hey, Uncle Mitrich," shouted the story-teller from the second sledge, "alive are you? . . . Come in to us."

But the old man, making no answer, went on scolding. When he judged he had said enough, he rode up to the second sledge.

"Caught them all?" was asked him from the sledge.

"I should think so!"

And his little figure bent forward with his breast on the horse's back while it was at full trot; then he slipped off into the snow, and without stopping an instant ran after the sledge, and tumbled into it, pulling his legs up over the side. The tall Vassily seated himself as before, in silence, in the front sledge with Ignashka, and began looking for the road with him.

"You see what an abusive fellow . . . Lord 'a' mercy on us!" muttered my driver.

For a long while after this we drove on without a halt over the white wilderness, in the cold, luminous, and flickering twilight of the snow-storm.

I open my eyes. The same clumsy cap and back, covered with snow, are standing up in front of me; the same low-arched yoke, under which, between the tight leather reins, the head of the shaft-horse shakes up and down always at the same distance away, with

its black mane blown rhythmically by the wind in one direction. Over its back on the right there is a glimpse of the bay trace-horse with its tail tied up short and the swinging bar behind it knocking now and then against the framework of the sledge. If I look down —the same crunching snow torn up by the sledge runners, and the wind persistently lifting it and carrying it off, always in the same direction. In front the foremost sledge is running on, always at the same distance; on the right and left everything is white and wavering. In vain the eye seeks some new object; not a post, not a stack, not a hedge—nothing to be seen. Everywhere all is white, white and moving. At one moment the horizon seems inconceivably remote, at the next closed in, two paces away on all sides. Suddenly a high, white wall shoots up on the right, and runs alongside the sledge, then all at once it vanishes and springs up ahead, to flee further and further away, and vanish again. One looks upwards; it seems light for the first minute—one seems to see stars shining through a mist; but the stars fly further and further away from the sight, and one can see nothing but the snow, which falls past the eyes into the face and the collar of one's cloak. Everywhere the sky is equally light, equally white, colourless, alike and ever moving. The wind seems to shift; at one time it blows in our faces and glues our eyes up with snow, then teasingly it flings one's fur collar on one's head and flaps it mockingly in one's face, then it drones behind in some chink of the sledge. One hears the faint, never-ceasing crunch of hoofs and runners over the snow, and the jingle of the bells, dying down as we drive over deep snow. Only at times when we are going against the wind and over some bare, frozen headland, Ignashka's vigorous whistling and the melodious tinkle of the bells with the jangling fifth float clearly to one's hearing, and these sounds make a comforting break in the desolateness of the snowy waste, and then again the bells fall back into the same monotonous jingle, with intolerable

correctness ringing ever the same phrase, which I cannot help picturing to myself in musical notes.

One of my legs began to get chilled, and when I turned over to wrap myself up closer, the snow on my collar and cap slipped down my neck and made me shiver; but on the whole, in my fur cloak, warmed through by the heat of my body, I still kept warm and was beginning to feel drowsy.

VI

Memories and fancies followed one another with increased rapidity in my imagination.

"The counsellor, that keeps on calling out advice from the second sledge, what sort of peasant is he likely to be? Sure to be a red-haired, thick-set fellow with short legs," I thought, "somewhat like Fyodor Filippitch, our old butler." And then I see the staircase of our great house and five house-serfs, who are stepping heavily, dragging along on strips of coarse linen a piano from the lodge. I see Fyodor Fillippitch, with the sleeves of his nankin coat turned up, carrying nothing but one pedal, running on ahead, pulling open bolts, tugging at a strip of linen here, shoving there, creeping between people's legs, getting in everyone's way, and in a voice of anxiety shouting assiduously:

"You now, in front, in front! That's it, the tail end upwa ds, upwards, upwards, through the doorway! That's it."

"You only let us be, Fyodor Filippitch, we'll do it by ourselves," timidly ventured the gardener, squeezed against the banisters, and red with exertion, as, putting out all his strength, he held up one corner of the piano.

But Fyodor Filippitch would not desist.

"And what is it?" I reflected. "Does he suppose he's necessary to the business in hand, or is he simply pleased God has given him that conceited, convincing

flow of words and enjoys the exercise of it? That's what it must be."

And for some reason I recall the pond, and the tired house-serfs, knee-deep in the water, dragging the draw-net, and again Fyodor Filippitch running along the bank with the watering-pot, shouting to all of them, and only approaching the water at intervals to take hold of the golden carp, to let out the muddy water, and to pour over them fresh.

And again it is midday in July. I am wandering over the freshly-mown grass of the garden, under the burning sun straight above my head. I am still very young; there is an emptiness, a yearning for something in my heart. I walk to my favourite spot near the pond, between a thicket of wild rose and the birch-tree avenue, and lie down to go to sleep. I remember the sensation with which, as I lay there, I looked through the red, thorny stems of the rose at the black earth, dried into little clods, and at the shining, bright blue mirror of the pond. It was with a feeling of naïve self-satisfaction and melancholy. Everything around me was so beautiful; its beauty had such an intense effect on me that it seemed to me I was beautiful myself, and my only vexation was that there was no one to admire me.

It is hot. I try to console myself by going to sleep. But the flies, the intolerable flies, will not even here give me any peace; they begin to gather together about me and persistently, stolidly, as it were like pellets, they shoot from forehead to hand. A bee buzzes not far from me, right in the hottest spot; yellow butterflies flutter languidly, it seems, from stalk to stalk. I look upwards, it makes my eyes ache; the sun is too dazzling through the bright foliage of the leafy birch tree, that gently swings its branches high above me, and I feel hotter than ever. I cover my face with my handkerchief; it becomes stifling, and the flies simply stick to my moist hands. Sparrows are twittering in the thickest of the clump of roses. One of them hops on the ground a yard from me; twice he makes a

feint of pecking vigorously at the earth, and with a snapping of twigs and a merry chirrup flies out of the bush. Another, too, hops on the ground, perks up his tail, looks round, and with a chirrup he too flies out like an arrow after the first. From the pond come the sounds of wet linen being beaten with washing-bats in the water, and the blows seem to echo and be carried over the surface of the pond. There is the sound of laughter, chatter, and the splashing of bathers. A gust of wind rustles in the tree-tops at a distance; it comes closer, and I hear it ruffling up the grass, and now the leaves of the wild roses tremble and beat upon the stems; and now it lifts the corner of the handkerchief and a fresh breath of air passes over me, tickling my moist face. A fly flies in under the lifted kerchief and buzzes in a frightened way about my damp mouth. A dead twig sticks into me under my spine. No, it's no good lying down; I'll go and have a bathe. But suddenly, close to my nook, I hear hurried footsteps and the frightened voices of women.

"Oh, mercy on us! What can we do! and not a man here!"

"What is it, what is it?" I ask, running out into the sunshine and addressing a serf-woman, who runs past me, groaning. She simply looks round, wrings her hands and runs on. But here comes Matrona, an old woman of seventy, holding on her kerchief as it falls back off her head, limping and dragging one leg in a worsted stocking, as she runs towards the pond. Two little girls run along, hand in hand, and a boy of ten, wearing his father's coat, hurries behind, clinging to the hempen skirt of one of them.

"What has happened?" I inquire of them.

"A peasant is drowning."

"Where?"

"In our pond."

"Who? one of ours?"

"No; a stranger."

The coachman Ivan, struggling over the newly-

mown grass in his big boots, and the stout bailiff, Yakov, breathing hard, run towards the pond, and I run after them.

I recall the feeling that said to me, "Come, jump in, and pull out the man, save him, and they will all admire you," which was just what I was desiring.

"Where? where is he?" I ask of the crowd of house-serfs gathered together on the bank.

"Over yonder, near the deepest pool, towards that bank, almost at the bath-house," says a washerwoman, getting in her wet linen on a yoke. "I saw him plunge in; and he comes up so and goes down again, and comes up again and screams, 'I'm drowning, mercy!' and again he went down to the bottom, and only bubbles came up. Then I saw the man was drowning. And I yelled, 'Mercy on us, the peasant's drowning!'"

And the washerwoman hoists the yoke on to her shoulder, and bending on one side, walks along the path away from the pond.

"My word, what a shame!" says Yakov Ivanov, the bailiff, in a voice of despair: "what a to-do we shall have now with the district court—we shall never hear the last of it!"

A peasant with a scythe makes his way through the throng of women, children, and old people crowding about the bank, and hanging his scythe in the branches of a willow, begins deliberately pulling off his boots.

"Where, where did he sink?" I keep on asking, longing to throw myself in and do something extraordinary.

But they point to the smooth surface of the pond, broken into ripples here and there by the rushing wind. It is inconceivable to me that he is drowned while the water stands just as smooth and beautiful and untroubled over him, shining with glints of gold in the midday sun, and it seems to me that I can do nothing, can astonish no one, especially as I am a very poor swimmer. And the peasant is already pulling his shirt over his head, and in an instant will

plunge in. Everyone watches him with hope and a sinking heart; but when he has waded in up to his shoulders, the peasant slowly turns back and puts on his shirt again—he cannot swim.

People still run up; the crowd gets bigger and bigger; the women cling to each other; but no one does anything to help. Those who have only just reached the pond give advice, and groan, and their faces express horror and despair. Of those who had arrived on the scene earlier some, tired of standing, sit down on the grass; others go back. Old Matrona asks her daughter whether she has shut the door of the oven; the boy in his father's coat flings stones with careful aim into the pond.

But now Trezorka, Fyodor Filippitch's dog, comes running down-hill from the house, barking and looking round in perplexity; and the figure of Fyodor himself, running down the hill and shouting something, comes into sight behind the thicket of wild rose.

"Why are you standing still?" he shouts, taking off his coat as he runs. "A man's drowning, and they do nothing. . . . Give us a cord!"

All gaze in hope and dread at Fyodor Filippitch, while leaning on the shoulder of an obliging house-serf he kicks off his right boot with the tip of his left one.

"Over there, where the crowd is; over there, a little to the right of the willow, Fyodor Filippitch, over there," says someone.

"I know," he answers, and knitting his brows, probably in acknowledgment of symptoms of outraged delicacy in the crowd of women, he takes off his shirt and his cross, handing the latter to the gardener's boy, who stands obsequiously before him. Then, stepping vigorously over the mown grass, he goes to the pond.

Trezorka, who had stood still near the crowd, eating some blades of grass from the water's edge, and smacking his lips, looks inquiringly at his master,

wondering at the rapidity of his movements. All at once, with a whine of delight, he plunges with his master into the water. For the first minute there is nothing to be seen but frothing bubbles, which float right up to us. But soon Fyodor Filippitch is seen swimming smartly towards the further bank, his arms making a graceful sweep, and his back rising and sinking regularly at every fathom's length. Trezorka, after swallowing a mouthful of water, hurriedly turns back, shakes himself in the crowd, and rolls on his back on the bank. While Fyodor Filippitch is swimming towards the further bank, the two coachmen run round to the willow with a net rolled round a pole. Fyodor Filippitch, for some reason or other, raises his hands above his head, and dives, once, twice, thrice; every time a stream of water runs out of his mouth, he tosses his hair with a fine gesture, and makes no reply to the questions which are showered upon him from all sides. At last he comes out on the bank, and, as far as I can see, simply gives orders for the casting of the net. The net is drawn up, but in it there is nothing except weed and a few carp struggling in it. While the net is being cast a second time, I walk round to that side.

Nothing is to be heard but the voice of Fyodor Filippitch giving directions, the splashing of the water through the wet cords, and sighs of horror. The wet cordage fastened to the right beam is more and more thickly covered with weed, as it comes further and further out of the water.

"Now pull together, all at once!" shouts the voice of Fyodor Filippitch. The butt-ends of the beams come into view covered with water.

"There is something; it pulls heavy, lads," says someone.

And now the beams of the net in which two or three carp struggle, splashing and crushing the weed, are dragged on to the bank. And through the shallow, shifting layer of muddy water something white comes into sight in the tightly-strained net. A sigh of

horror passes over the crowd, subdued but distinctly audible in the deathlike stillness.

"Pull all together, pull it on to dry land!" cries Fyodor Filippitch's resolute voice. And with the iron hook they drag the drowned man over the cropped stalks of dock and agrimony towards the willow.

And here I see my kind old aunt in her silk gown; I see her fringed, lilac parasol, which seems somehow oddly incongruous with this scene of death, so awful in its simplicity. I see her face on the point of shedding tears. I recall her look of disappointment that in this case arnica could be of no use, and I recall the painful sense of mortification I had when she said to me with the naïve egoism of love, "Let us go, my dear. Ah, how awful it is! And you will always go bathing and swimming alone!"

I remember how glaring and hot the sun was, baking the dry earth that crumbled under our feet; how it sparkled on the mirror of the pond; how the big carp struggled on the bank; how a shoal of fish dimpled the pond's surface in the middle; how a hawk floated high up in the sky, hovering over the ducks, who swam quacking and splashing among the reeds in the centre of the water; how the white, curly storm-clouds gathered on the horizon; how the mud brought on to the bank by the net gradually slipped away; and how, as I crossed the dike, I heard the sounds of the washing-bat floating across the pond.

But the blows of the bat ring out as though there were two bats and another chiming in, a third lower in the scale; and that sound frets me, worries me, especially as I know the bat is a bell, and Fyodor Filippitch can't make it stop. And the bat, like an instrument of torture, is crushing my leg, which is chilled. I wake up.

I was waked up, it seemed to me, by our galloping very swiftly, and two voices talking quite close beside me.

"I say, Ignat, eh . . . Ignat!" said the voice of

my driver; "take my fare; you've got to go anyway, and why should I go on for nothing—take him!"

The voice of Ignat close beside me answered:

"It's no treat for me to have to answer for a passenger. . . . Will you stand me a pint bottle of *vodka?*"

"Go on with your pint bottle! . . . A dram, and I'll say done."

"A dram!" shouted another voice: "a likely idea! tire your horses for a dram!"

I opened my eyes. Still the same insufferable wavering snow floating before one's eyes, the same drivers and horses, but beside me I saw a sledge. My driver had overtaken Ignat, and we had been for some time moving alongside. Although the voice from the other sledge advised him not to accept less than a pint, Ignat all at once pulled up his horses.

"Move the baggage in! Done! it's your luck. Stand me a dram when we come to-morrow. Have you much baggage, eh?"

My driver jumped out into the snow with an alacrity quite unlike him, bowed to me, and begged me to get into Ignat's sledge. I was perfectly ready to do so; but evidently the God-fearing peasant was so pleased that he wanted to lavish his gratitude and joy on someone. He bowed and thanked me, Alyoshka, and Ignashka.

"There, thank God too! Why, Lord 'a' mercy, here we've been driving half the night, and don't know ourselves where we're going! He'll take you all right, sir, but my horses are quite done up."

And he moved my things with increased energy. While they were shifting my things, with the wind at my back almost carrying me off my legs, I went towards the second sledge. The sledge was more than a quarter buried in the snow, especially on the side where a cloak had been hung over the two drivers' heads to keep off the wind; under the cloak it was sheltered and snug. The old man was lying just as before with his legs out, while the story-teller was still

telling his story: "So at the very time when the general arrived in the king's name, that is, to Mariya in the prison, Mariya says to him, 'General! I don't want you, and I cannot love you, and you are not my lover; my lover is that same prince.' . . . So then"—he was going on, but, seeing me, he paused a moment, and began pulling at his pipe.

"Well, sir, are you come to listen to the tale?" said the other man, whom I have called the counsellor.

"Why, you are nice and cheerful in here!" I said.

"To be sure, it passes the time—anyway, it keeps one from thinking."

"Don't you know, really, where we are now?" This question, it struck me, was not liked by the drivers.

"Why, who's to make out where we are? Maybe we've got to the Kalmucks altogether," answered the counsellor.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"What are we to do? Why, we'll go on, and maybe we'll get somewhere," he said in a tone of displeasure.

"Well, but if we don't get there, and the horses can go no further in the snow, what then?"

"What then? Nothing."

"But we may freeze."

"To be sure, we may, for there are no stacks to be seen now; we must have driven right out to the Kalmucks. The chief thing is, we must look about in the snow."

"And aren't you at all afraid of being frozen, sir?" said the old man, in a trembling voice.

Although he seemed to be jeering at me, I could see that he was shivering in every bone.

"Yes, it's getting very cold," I said.

"Ah, sir! You should do as I do; every now and then take a run; that would warm you."

"It's first-rate, the way you run after the sledge," said the counsellor.

VII

"PLEASE get in: it's all ready!" Alyoshka called to me from the front sledge.

The blizzard was so terrific that it was only by my utmost efforts, bending double and clutching the skirts of my coat in both hands, that I managed to struggle through the whirling snow, which was blown up by the wind under my feet, and to make the few steps that separated me from the sledge. My former driver was kneeling in the middle of the empty sledge, but on seeing me he took off his big cap; whereupon the wind snatched at his hair furiously. He asked me for something for drink, but most likely had not expected me to give him anything extra, for my refusal did not in the least disappoint him. He thanked me for that too, put on his cap, and said to me, "Well, good luck to you, sir!" and tugging at his reins, and clucking to his horses, he drove away from us. After that, Ignashka too, with a swing of his whole body forward, shouted to his horses. Again the sound of the crunching of the hoofs, shouting, and bells replaced the sound of the howling of the wind, which was more audible when we were standing still.

For a quarter of an hour after moving I did not go to sleep, but amused myself by watching the figures of my new driver and horses. Ignashka sat up smartly, incessantly jumping up and down, swinging his arm with the whip over the horses, shouting, knocking one leg against the other, and bending forward to set straight the shaft-horse's breech, which kept slipping to the right side. He was not tall, but seemed to be well built. Over his full coat he had on a cloak not tied in at the waist; the collar of it was open, and his neck was quite bare; his boots were not of felt, but of leather, and his cap was a small one, which he was continually taking off and shifting. His ears had no covering but his hair.

In all his actions could be detected not merely

energy, but even more, it struck me, the desire to keep up his own energies. The further we went, the more and more frequently he jumped up and down on the box, shifted his position, slapped one leg against the other, and addressed remarks to me and Alyoshka. It seemed to me he was afraid of losing heart. And there was good reason; though we had good horses, the road became heavier and heavier at every step, and the horses unmistakably moved more unwillingly; he had to use the whip now, and the shaft-horse, a spirited, big, shaggy horse, stumbled twice, though at once taking fright, he darted forward and flung up his shaggy head almost to the very bells. The right trace-horse, whom I could not help watching, noticeably kept the traces slack, together with the long leather tassel of the breech, that shifted and shook up and down on the off-side. He needed the whip, but, like a good, spirited horse, he seemed vexed at his own feebleness, and angrily dropped and flung up his head, as though asking for the rein. It certainly was terrible to see the blizzard getting more and more violent, the horses growing weaker, and the road getting worse, while we hadn't a notion where we were and whether we should reach the station, or even a shelter of any sort. And ludicrous and strange it was to hear the bells ringing so gaily and unconcernedly and Ignashka calling so briskly and jauntily, as though we were driving at midday in sunny, frosty Christmas weather, along some village street on a holiday; and strangest of all it was to think that we were going on all the while and going quickly, anywhere to get away from where we were. Ignashka sang a song, in the vilest falsetto, but so loudly and with breaks in it, filled in by such whistling, that it was odd to feel frightened as one listened to him.

"Hey, hey, what are you splitting your throat for, Ignashka?" I heard the voice of the counsellor. "Do stop it for an hour."

"What?"

"Shut up!"

Ignat ceased. Again all was quiet, and the wind howled and whined, and the whirling snow began to lie thicker on our sledge. The counsellor came up to us.

"Well, what is it?"

"What, indeed; which way are we to go?"

"Who knows?"

"Why, are your feet frozen, that you keep beating them together?"

"They're quite numb."

"You should take a run. There's something over yonder; isn't it a Kalmuck encampment? It would warm your feet, anyway."

"All right. Hold the horses . . . there."

And Ignat ran in the direction indicated.

"One must keep looking and walking round, and one will find something; what's the sense of driving on like a fool?" the counsellor said to me. "See, what a steam the horses are in!"

All the time Ignat was gone—and that lasted so long that I began to be afraid he was lost—the counsellor told me in a calm, self-confident tone, how one must act during a blizzard, how the best thing of all was to unyoke a horse and let it go its own way; that as God is holy, it would lead one right; how one could sometimes see by the stars, and how if he had been driving the leading sledge, we should have been at the station long ago.

"Well, is it?" he asked Ignat, who was coming back, stepping with difficulty almost knee-deep in the snow.

"Yes, it's an encampment," Ignat answered, panting, "but I don't know what sort of a one. We must have come right out to Prolgovsky homestead, mate. We must bear more to the left."

"What nonsense! . . . That's our encampment, behind the village!" retorted the counsellor.

"But I tell you it's not!"

"Why, I've looked, so I know. That's what it will be; or if not that, then it's Tamishevsko. We

must keep more to the right, and we shall get out on the big bridge, at the eighth verst, directly."

"I tell you it's not so! Why, I've seen it!" Ignat answered with irritation.

"Hey, mate, and you call yourself a driver!"

"Yes, I do. . . . You go yourself!"

"What should I go for? I know as it is."

Ignat unmistakably lost his temper; without replying, he jumped on the box and drove on.

"I say, my legs are numb; there's no warming them," he said to Alyoshka, clapping his legs together more and more frequently, and knocking off and scraping at the snow, that had got in above his boot-tops.

I felt awfully sleepy.

VIII

"CAN I really be beginning to freeze?" I wondered sleepily. "Being frozen always begins by sleepiness, they say. Better be drowned than frozen—let them drag me out in the net; but never mind, I don't care whether it's drowning or freezing, if only that stick, or whatever it is, wouldn't poke me in the back, and I could forget everything."

I lost consciousness for a second.

"How will it all end, though?" I suddenly wondered, opening my eyes for a minute and staring at the white expanse of snow; "how will it end, if we don't come across any stacks, and the horses come to a standstill, which I fancy will happen soon? We shall all be frozen." I must own that, though I was a little frightened, the desire that something extraordinary and rather tragic should happen to us was stronger than a little fear. It struck me that it would not be bad if, towards morning, the horses should reach some remote, unknown village, with us half-frozen, some of us indeed completely frozen. And dreams of something like that floated with extra-

ordinary swiftness and clearness before my imagination. The horses stop, the snow drifts higher and higher, and now nothing can be seen of the horses but their ears and the yoke; but suddenly Ignashka appears on the top of the snow with his three horses and drives past us. We entreat him, we scream to him to take us with him; but the wind blows away our voice, there is no voice heard. Ignashka laughs, shouts to his horses, whistles, and vanishes from our sight in a deep ravine filled with snow. The old man is on horseback, his elbows jogging up and down, and he tries to gallop away, but cannot move from the spot. My old driver with his big cap rushes at him, drags him to the ground and tramples him in the snow. "You're a sorcerer," he shouts, "you're abusive, we will be lost together." But the old man pops his head out of a snowdrift; he is not so much an old man now as a hare, and he hops away from us. All the dogs are running after him. The counsellor, who is Fyodor Filippitch, says we must all sit round in a ring, that it doesn't matter if the snow does bury us; we shall be warm. And we really are warm and snug; only we are thirsty. I get out a case of wine; I treat all of them to rum with sugar in it, and I drink it myself with great enjoyment. The story-teller tells us some tale about a rainbow—and over our heads there is a ceiling made of snow and a rainbow. "Now let us make ourselves each a room in the snow and go to sleep!" I say. The snow is soft and warm like fur; I make myself a room and try to get into it, but Fyodor Filippitch, who has seen my money in the wine-case, says, "Stop, give me the money—you have to die anyway!" and he seizes me by the leg. I give him the money, and only beg him to let me go; but they will not believe it is all the money, and try to kill me. I clutch at the old man's hand, and with inexpressible delight begin kissing it; the old man's hand is soft and sweet. At first he snatches it away, but then he gives it me, and even strokes me with the other hand. But Fyodor Filippitch approaches and

threatens me. I run into my room; now it is not a room, but a long, white corridor, and someone is holding me by the legs. I pull myself away. My boots and stockings, together with part of my skin, are left in the hands of the man who held me. But I only feel cold and ashamed—all the more ashamed as my aunt with her parasol and her homœopathic medicine-chest is coming to meet me, arm-in-arm with the drowned man. They are laughing, and do not understand the signs I make to them. I fling myself into a sledge, my legs drag in the snow; but the old man pursues me, his elbows jogging up and down. The old man is close upon me, but I hear two bells ringing in front of me, and I know I am safe if I can reach them. The bells ring more and more distinctly; but the old man has overtaken me and fallen with his body on my face, so that I can hardly hear the bells. I snatch his hand again, and begin kissing it, but he is not the old man but the drowned man, and he shouts, "Ignashka, stop, yonder are the Ahmetkin stacks, I do believe! Run and look!" That is too dreadful. No, I had better wake up.

I open my eyes. The wind has blown the skirt of Alyoshka's coat over my face; my knee is uncovered; we are driving over a bare surface of ice, and the chime of the bells with its jangling fifth rings out more distinctly in the air.

I look to see where there is a stack! but instead of stacks, I see now with open eyes a house with a balcony and a turreted wall like a fortress. I feel little interest in examining this house and fortress. I want most to see again the white corridor, along which I was running, to hear the church bell ringing and to kiss the old man's hand. I close my eyes again and fall asleep.

IX

I SLEPT soundly; but the chime of the bells was audible all the while, and came into my dreams; at one time

in the form of a dog barking and rushing at me, then an organ, of which I am one of the pipes, then French verses which I am composing. Then it seemed that the chime of the bell is an instrument of torture with which my right heel is being continually squeezed. This was so vivid that I woke up and opened my eyes, rubbing my foot. It was beginning to get frostbitten. The night was as light, as dim, as white as ever. The same movement jolted me and the sledge; Ignashka was sitting sideways as before, clapping his legs together. The trace-horse, as before, craning his neck and not lifting his legs high, ran trotting over the deep snow; the tassel bobbed up and down on the breech, and lashed against the horse's belly. The shaft-horse's head, with his mane flying, swayed regularly up and down, tightening and loosening the reins that were fastened to the yoke. But all this was more than ever covered, buried in snow. The snow whirled in front of us, buried the runners on one side, and the horse's legs up to the knees, and was piled up high on our collars and caps. The wind blew first on the right, then on the left, played with my collar, with the skirt of Ignashka's coat, and the trace-horse's mane, and whistled through the yoke and the shafts.

It had become fearfully cold, and I had hardly peeped out of my fur collar when the dry, frozen, whirling snow settled on my eyelashes, my nose and my mouth, and drifted down my neck. I looked round—all was white, and light and snowy; nowhere anything but dim light and snow. I felt seriously alarmed. Alyoshka was asleep at my feet, right at the bottom of the sledge; his whole back was covered by a thick layer of snow. Ignashka was not depressed, he was incessantly tugging at the reins, shouting and clapping his feet together. The bells rang as strangely as ever. The horses were panting, but they still went on, though rather more slowly, and stumbling more and more often. Ignashka jumped up and down again, brandished his gloves, and began singing a song in his shrill, strained voice. Before he had finished

the song, he pulled up, flung the reins on the forepart of the sledge, and got down. The wind howled ruthlessly; the snow simply poured as it were in shovelfuls on the skirts of my fur cloak. I looked round; the third sledge was not there (it had been left behind somewhere). Beside the second sledge I could see in the snowy fog the old man hopping from one leg to the other. Ignashka walked three steps away from the sledge, sat down on the snow, undid his belt and began taking off his boots.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I must take my boots off; or my feet will be quite frostbitten!" he answered, going on with what he was about.

It was too cold for me to poke my neck out of my fur collar to see what he was doing. I sat up straight, looking at the trace-horse, who stood with one leg outstretched in an attitude of painful exhaustion, shaking his tied-up, snowy tail. The jolt Ignashka gave the sledge in jumping up on the box waked me up.

"Well, where are we now?" I asked. "Shall we go on till morning?"

"Don't you worry yourself, we'll take you all right," he answered. "Now my feet are grandly warm since I shifted my boots."

And he started; the bells began ringing; the sledge began swaying from side to side; and the wind whistled through the runners. And again we set off floating over the boundless sea of snow.

X

I SLEPT soundly. When I was waked up by Alyoshka kicking me, and opened my eyes, it was morning. It seemed even colder than in the night. No snow was falling from above; but the keen, dry wind was still driving the fine snow along the ground and especially under the runners and the horse's hoofs. To the right the sky in the east was a heavy, dingy blue colour;

but bright, orange-red, slanting rays were becoming more and more clearly marked in it. Overhead, behind the flying white clouds, faintly tinged with red, the pale blue sky was visible; on the left the clouds were light, bright, and moving. Everywhere around, as far as the eye could see, the country lay under deep, white snow, thrown up into sharp ridges. Here and there could be seen a greyish hillock, where the fine, dry snow had persistently blown by. Not a track of sledge, or man, or beast was visible. The outlines and colours of the driver's back and the horses could be seen clearly and distinctly against the white background. . . . The rim of Ignashka's dark blue cap, his collar, his hair, and even his boots were white. The sledge was completely buried. The grey shaft-horse's head and forelock were covered with snow on the right side; my right trace-horse's legs were buried up to the knee, and all his back, crisp with frozen sweat, was coated with snow on the off-side. The tassel was still dancing in time to any tune one liked to fancy, and the trace-horse stepped to the same rhythm. It was only from his sunken belly, that heaved and fell so often, and his drooping ears that one could see how exhausted he was. Only one new object caught my attention. That was a verst post, from which the snow was falling to the ground, and about which the wind had swept up quite a mountain on the right and kept whirling and shifting the powdery snow from one side to the other. I was utterly amazed to find that we had been driving the whole night with the same horses, twelve hours without stopping or knowing where we were going, and yet had somehow arrived. Our bells chimed more gaily than ever. Ignat kept wrapping himself round and shouting; behind us we heard the snorting of the horses and the ringing of the bells of the sledge in which were the old man and the counsellor; but the man who had been asleep had gone completely astray from us on the steppe. When we had driven on another half-verst, we came upon fresh tracks of a

sledge and three horses, not yet covered by the snow, and here and there we saw a red spot of blood, most likely from a horse that had been hurt.

"That's Filip. Why, he's got in before us!" said Ignashka.

And now a little house with a signboard came into sight near the roadside, in the middle of the snow, which buried it almost to the roof and windows. Near the little inn stood a sledge with three grey horses, with their coats crisp with sweat, their legs stiffly stretched out, and their heads drooping. The snow had been cleared about the door, and a spade stood there; but the droning wind still whirled and drifted the snow from the roof.

At the sound of our bells there came out from the door a big, red-faced, red-haired driver, holding a glass of *vodka* in his hand, and shouting something to us. Ignashka turned to me and asked my permission to stop here; then, for the first time, I saw his face.

XI

His face was not swarthy, lean, and straight-nosed, as I had expected, judging from his hair and figure. It was a merry, round face, with quite a pug nose, a large mouth, and round, bright, light blue eyes. His face and neck were red, as though they had been rubbed with a polishing cloth; his eyebrows, long eyelashes, and the down that covered all the lower part of his face were stiffly coated with snow and perfectly white. It was only half a verst from the station, and we stopped.

"Only make haste," I said.

"One minute," answered Ignashka, jumping off the box and going towards Filip.

"Give it here, mate," he said, taking the glove off his right hand and flinging it with the whip on the snow, and throwing back his head, he tossed off the glass of *vodka* at one gulp.

The innkeeper, probably an old Cossack, came out of the door with a pint bottle in his hand.

"To whom shall I take some?" said he.

Tall Vassily, a thin, flaxen-headed peasant with a goat's beard, and the counsellor, a stout man with light eyebrows and a thick light beard framing his red face, came up, and drank a glass each. The old man, too, was approaching the group, but they did not offer him any, and he moved away to his horses, that were fastened at the back of the sledge, and began stroking one of them on the back.

The old man was just as I had imagined him to be —a thin little man, with a wrinkled, bluish face, a scanty beard, a sharp nose and decayed, yellow teeth. His cap was a regular driver's cap, perfectly new, but his greatcoat was shabby, smeared with tar, and torn about the shoulders and skirts. It did not cover his knees, and his coarse, hempen under-garment, which was stuffed into his huge, felt boots. He was bent and wrinkled, his face quivering, and his knees trembling. He bustled about the sledge, apparently trying to get warm.

"Why, Mitrich, have a drop; it would warm you finely," the counsellor said to him.

Mitrich gave a shrug. He straightened the breech on his horse, set the yoke right, and came up to me.

"Well, sir," said he, taking his cap off his grey hair, and bowing low, "we've been lost all night along with you, and looking for the road; you might treat me to a glass. Surely, your Excellency! Else I've nothing to warm me up," he added with a deprecating smile.

I gave him twenty-five copecks. The innkeeper brought out a glass and handed it to the old man. He took off his glove with the whip, and put his black horny little hand, blue with cold, to the glass; but his thumb was not under his control; he could not hold the glass, and let it drop, spilling the *vodka* in the snow.

All the drivers laughed.

"I say, Mitrich is so frozen he can't hold the *vodka*."

But Mitritch was greatly mortified at having spilt the drink.

They poured him out another glass, however, and put it to his lips. He became more cheerful at once, ran into the inn, lighted a pipe, began grinning, showing his decayed, yellow teeth, and at every word he uttered an oath. After drinking a last glass, the drivers got into their sledges, and we drove on.

The snow became whiter and brighter, so that it made one's eyes ache to look at it. The orange-red streaks spread higher and higher, and grew brighter and brighter in the sky overhead. The red disc of the sun appeared on the horizon through the dark blue clouds. The blue became deeper and more brilliant. Along the road near the station there was a distinct yellowish track, with here and there deep ruts in it. In the tense, frozen air there was a peculiar, refreshing lightness.

My sledge flew along very briskly. The head of the shaft-horse, with his mane floating up on the yoke above, bobbed up and down quickly under the sportsman's bell, the clapper of which did not move freely now, but somehow grated against the sides. The gallant trace-horses, pulling together at the twisted, frozen traces, trotted vigorously, and the tassel danced right under the belly and the breech. Sometimes a trace-horse slipped off the beaten track into a snowdrift, and his eyes were all powdered with snow as he plunged smartly out of it. Ignashka shouted in a cheerful tenor; the dry frost crunched under the runners; behind us we heard the two bells ringing out with a clear, festive note, and the drunken shouts of the drivers. I looked round. The grey, crisp-haired trace-horses, breathing regularly, galloped over the snow with outstretched necks and bits askew. Filip cracked his whip and set his cap straight. The old man lay in the middle of the sledge with his legs up as before.

Two minutes later the sledge was creaking over the swept boards of the approach to the posting-station, and Ignashka turned his merry face, all covered with frost and snow, towards me.

"We've brought you safe after all, sir," said he.

THE RAID [1]

(A Volunteer's Story. 1852)

Translated by Constance Garnett

I

On 12th July Captain Hlopov came in at the low door of my mud-hut, wea ing his epaulettes and his sabre—a full uniform, in which I had not seen him since I had arrived in the Caucasus.

"I have come straight from the colonel," he said in reply to the look of inquiry with which I met him; "our battalion is marching to-morrow."

"Where to?" I asked.

"To N——. That's where the troops are to concentrate."

"From there they will advance into action, I suppose?"

"Most likely."

"Where? What do you think?"

"I don't think. I am telling you what I know. A Tatar galloped up last night with nstructions from the general—the battalion to set off, taking two days' rations of biscuit. But where, and what for, and for how long—that, my dear sir, we don't ask; we're told to go and that's enough."

"If you're only taking biscuit for two days, though, the troops won't be detained longer than that."

"Oh, well, that doesn't prove anything. . . ."

"How's that?" I asked with surprise.

"Why, they marched to Dargi taking biscuit for a week and were nearly a month there."

"And can I go with you?" I asked after a short silence.

[1] This story is printed by the kind permission of the proprietors of *The English Review.*

"You can, of course, but my advice is, better not go. Why should you run any risk?"

"No, you must allow me not to follow your advice; I have been a whole month here simply on the chance of seeing an action, and you want me to miss it."

"Go, if you will. Only, wouldn't it be better to stay here, really? You could wait here till we came back, you could have some shooting, while we would go, as God wills! And that would be first-rate!" he said in such a persuasive tone that I really did feel for the first minute that it would be first-rate. I answered firmly, however, that I would not stay behind for any consideration.

"And what is there you haven't seen in it?" the captain went on, trying to persuade me. "If you want to know what battles are like, read Mihailosky-Danilevsky's *Description of War*—it's a fine book. It's all described in detail there—where every corps was stationed and how the battles were fought."

"But that's just what doesn't interest me," I answered.

"What is it then? You simply want to see how men are killed, it seems? . . . In 1832 there was a civilian here too, a Spaniard, I think he was. He went on two expeditions with us, wearing a blue cloak of some sort . . . they did for him just the same. You can't astonish anybody here, my dear sir."

Though I felt sore at the captain's putting such a despicable construction on my intentions, I did not attempt to set him right.

"Was he a brave man?" I asked.

"How can I tell? He used to be always in the front; wherever there was firing, he was in it."

"Then he must have been brave," I said.

"No, it doesn't follow that a man's brave because he thrusts himself where he's not wanted."

"What do you call being brave then?"

"Brave? brave?" repeated the captain, with the air of a man to whom such a question is presented

for the first time. "*He's a brave man who behaves as he ought*," he said after a moment's reflection.

I recalled Plato's definition of bravery—*the knowledge of what one need and what one need not fear*, and in spite of the vagueness and looseness of expression in the captain's definition, I thought that the fundamental idea of both was not so different as might be supposed, and that the captain's definition was, indeed, more correct than the Greek philosopher's, because if he could have expressed himself like Plato, he would probably have said that the brave man is he who fears only *what he ought to fear*, and not *what he need not fear*.

I wanted to explain my idea to the captain.

"Yes," I said, "it seems to me that in every danger there is a choice, and the choice made, for instance, under the influence of a sense of duty is bravery, while the choice made under the influence of a low feeling is cowardice, because the man who risks his life from vanity, or curiosity, or greed of gain, can't be called brave; while, on the other hand, a man who refuses to face danger from an honourable feeling of duty to his family, or simply on conscientious grounds, can't be called a coward."

The captain looked at me with rather an odd expression while I was talking.

"Well, I'm not equal to proving that," he said, filling his pipe, "but we have an ensign who is fond of philosophising. You must talk to him. He writes verses even."

I had only met the captain in the Caucasus, though I knew a great deal about him in Russia. His mother, Marya Ivanovna Hlopov, was living on her small estate a mile and a half from my home. Before I set off for the Caucasus, I went to see her. The old lady was delighted that I was going to see her Pashenka, as she called the grey-headed elderly captain, and that I could, like a living letter, tell him how she was getting on, and take him a parcel from home. After regaling me with a capital pie and salted game, Marya Ivanovna

went into her bedroom and fetched from there a rather large black amulet, with a black silk ribbon sewn on it.

"This is our Holy Guardian, Mother of the Burning Bush," she said, crossing herself, and kissing the image of the Mother of God, before putting it into my hand, "be so kind, sir, as to give it to him. When he went to the *Caucasus*, you know, I had a service sung for him, and made a vow that if he were alive and unhurt I would have that image made of the Holy Mother. Now it's eighteen years that our Guardian Lady and the holy saints have had mercy on him. He has not once been wounded, and yet what battles he has been in! . . . When Mihailo, who was with him, told me about it, would you believe it, it made my hair stand on end. If I hear anything about him, it's only from other people, though; he, dear boy, never writes a word to me about his campaigns—he's afraid of frightening me."

It was only in the Caucasus, and then not from the captain, that I learned that he had been four times severely wounded, and, I need hardly say, had written no more to his mother about his wounds than about his campaigns.

"So let him wear this holy figure now," she went on; "I send him my blessing with it. The Most Holy Guardian Mother will protect him! Let him always have it on him, especially in battles. Tell him, please, that his mother bids him."

I promised to carry out her instructions exactly.

"I am sure you will like my Pashenka," the old lady went on, "he's such a dear boy! Would you believe it, not a year goes by without his sending me money, and Annushka, my daughter, has had a great deal of help from him, too . . . and it's all out of nothing but his pay! I am ever truly thankful to God," she concluded, with tears in her eyes, "for giving me such a son."

"Does he often write to you?" I asked.

"Not often; usually only once a year; when he sends money, he'll send a word or two, but not else

'If I don't write, mother,' he says, 'it means that I'm alive and well; if anything, which God forbid, should happen, they'll write to you for me.'"

When I gave the captain his mother's present—it was in my hut—he asked for a piece of tissue-paper, wrapped it carefully up and put it away. I gave him a minute account of his mother's daily life; the captain did not speak. When I finished, he turned away and was rather a long time filling his pipe in the corner.

"Yes, she's a splendid old lady!" he said without turning, in a rather husky voice. "Will God send me back to see her again, I wonder?"

A very great deal of love and sadness was expressed in those simple words.

"Why do you serve here?" I said.

"I have to," he answered with conviction. "The double pay for active service means a great deal for a poor man like me."

The captain lived carefully; he did not play; seldom drank, and smoked a cheap tobacco, which for some unknown reason he used to call not shag, but *Sambrotalik*. I liked the captain from the first; he had one of those quiet, straightforward Russian faces, into whose eyes one finds it pleasant and easy to look straight. But after this conversation I felt a genuine respect for him.

II

At four o'clock next morning the captain came to fetch me He was wearing a frayed old coat without epaulettes, full Caucasian breeches, a white astrakhan cap with the wool shabby and yellowish, and he had an inferior-looking Asiatic sabreslung over his shoulder. The white Caucasian pony, on which he was mounted, held its head down, moved with little ambling paces, and incessantly shook its thin tail. Though there was nothing martial nor fine-looking about the good

captain's appearance, it showed such indifference to everything surrounding him that it inspired an involuntary feeling of respect.

I did not keep him waiting a minute, but got on my horse at once, and we rode out of the fortress gates together.

The battalion was already some six hundred yards ahead of us and looked like a dark, compact heavy mass. We could only tell that they were infantry because the bayonets were seen like a dense mass of long needles, and from time to time we caught snatches of the soldiers' song, the drum, and the exquisite tenor voice of the leading singer of the sixth company, which I had heard with delight more than once in the fortress. The road ran down the midst of a deep and wide ravine, along the bank of a little stream, which was at that time "in play," that is to say, overflowing its banks. Flocks of wild pigeons were hovering about it, settling on its stony bank and then wheeling in the air and flying up in swift circles out of sight. The sun was not yet visible, but the very top of the cliff on the right side began to show patches of sunlight. The grey and whitish stones, the yellow-green moss, the dense bushes of Christ's thorn, dog-berries and dwarf elm, stood out with extraordinary sharpness, in the limpid golden light of sunrise. But the hollow and the opposite side of the ravine were damp and dark with a thick mist that hung over them in rolling uneven masses like smoke, and through it dimly one caught an elusive medley of changing hues, pale lilac, almost black, dark green and white. Straight before us, against the dark blue of the horizon, rose with startling clearness the dazzling, dead-white of the snow mountains, with their fantastic shadows and outlines that were daintily beautiful to the minutest detail. Grasshoppers, crickets, and thousands of other insects were awake in the high grass and filling the air with their shrill, incessant sounds. An infinite multitude of tiny bells seemed to be ringing just in one's ears. The air was full of the smell of water and grass and

mist, of the smell, in fact, of a fine morning in summer.

The captain struck a light and lit his pipe; the smell of the *Sambrotalik* tobacco and of the tinder were exceptionally pleasant to me.

We kept on the side of the road so as to overtake the infantry more quickly. The captain seemed more thoughtful than usual. He did not take his Daghestan pipe out of his mouth, and at every yard gave a shove with his feet to urge on his pony, who, swaying from side to side, left a scarcely visible dark green track in the wet, long grass. An old cock pheasant flew up from under its very hoofs, with the gurgling cry and the whir of wings that sets a sportsman's heart beating, and slowly rose in the air. The captain did not take the slightest notice of it.

We were almost overtaking the battalion when we heard the hoofs of a galloping horse behind us, and in the same instant a very pretty and boyish youth, in the uniform of an officer, and a high white astrakhan cap, galloped up. As he passed us, he smiled, nodded, and waved his whip. . . . I had only time to notice that he sat his horse and held his reins with a certain individual grace, and that he had beautiful black eyes, a delicate nose, and only the faintest trace of moustache. I was particularly charmed at his not being able to help smiling when he saw we were admiring him. From that smile alone one could have been sure that he was very young.

"And what is it he's galloping to?" the captain muttered with an air of vexation, not removing his pipe from his lips.

"Who is that?" I asked him.

"Ensign Alanin, a subaltern of my company. . . . It's only a month since he joined from the military school."

"I suppose it's the first time he's going into action," I said.

"That's just why he's so happy about it!" answered

the captain, shaking his head with an air of profundity. "Ah, youth!"

"Well, how can he help being glad? I can understand that for a young officer it must be very interesting."

The captain did not speak for a couple of minutes.

"That's just what I say; it's youth!" he resumed in his bass voice. "What is there to be pleased about before one knows what it's like! When you have been out often, you're not pleased at it. We've now, let us say, twenty officers on the march; that somebody will be killed or wounded, that's certain. To-day it's my turn, to-morrow his, and next day another man's. So what is there to be happy about?"

III

The bright sun had scarcely risen from behind the mountains and begun to shine on the valley along which we were marching, when the billowy clouds of mist parted, and it became hot. The soldiers, with their guns and knapsacks on their backs, walked slowly along the dusty road; from time to time I heard snatches of Little Russian talk and laughter in the ranks. A few old soldiers in white canvas tunics—for the most part sergeants or corporals—marched along on the side of the road, smoking their pipes and talking soberly. The wagons, drawn by three horses and piled high with baggage, moved forward at a walking pace, stirring up a thick, immovable cloud of dust. The officers rode in front; some of them were jigiting, as they say in the Caucasus, that is, whipping up their horses till they made them prance some four times, and then sharply pulling them up with their heads on one side. Others entertained themselves with the singers, who, in spite of the stifling heat, untiringly kept up one song after another. About three hundred yards in front of the infantry, on a big white horse surrounded by Tatar cavalry,

rode an officer famous in the regiment for his reckless daring, and for being a man who would tell the truth to anyone's face. He was a tall, handsome man, dressed in Asiatic style, in a black tunic with embroidered borders, leggings to match, new, richly-embroidered, closely-fitting shoes, a yellow Circassian coat and a tall astrakhan cap tilted backwards on his head. Over his chest and back he had bands of silver embroidery in which his powder-horn was thrust in front and his pistol behind. A second pistol and a dagger in a silver sheath hung at his belt. Over all this was girt a sabre in a red morocco case edged with embroidery, and over his shoulder was slung a rifle in a black case. His costume, his manner of riding and holding himself, and every movement he made showed that he was trying to look like a Tatar. He even spoke to the Tatars riding with him in a language I did not know. But from the puzzled and sarcastic looks the latte gave one another, I fancied that they did not understand him either. This was a young lieutenant, one of the so-called jigit-gallants who model themselves on Marlinsky and Lermontov. These men cannot see the Caucasus except through the prism of the "heroes of our times," of Mullah-Nur, etc., and in every gesture they are guided not by their own tastes but by the example of these paragons.

The lieutenant, for instance, was perhaps fond of the society of ladies and persons of importance—generals, colonels, adjutants—I feel sure, indeed, that he was very fond of such society because he was excessively vain. But he thought it his imperative duty to turn his rough side to all people of consequence, though his rudeness after all never amounted to very much. And whenever a lady made her appearance at the fortress he felt bound to pass by her window with his boon companions, wearing a red shirt and with nothing but slippers on his bare feet, and to shout and swear as loudly as possible. But all this was not so much from a desire to offend her as to show her what

splendid white legs he had, and how easy it would be to fall in love with him, if he chose to wish it.

Often he would go out at night into the mountains with two or three peaceable Tatars to lie in ambush by the wayside so as to waylay and kill hostile Tatars who might pass by, and though he felt more than once in his heart that there was nothing very daring in this, he felt bound to make men suffer because he affected to be disappointed in them for some reason and so affected to hate and despise them. Two objects he never removed from his person; a large ikon on his neck and a dagger which he wore over his shirt, even when he went to bed. He genuinely believed that he had enemies. To persuade himself that he must be avenged on someone and wipe out some insult with blood was his greatest enjoyment. He was convinced that the feelings of hatred, revenge and disdain for the human race were the loftiest and most poetical sentiments. But his mistress, a Circassian, of course, with whom I happened to become acquainted later on, told me that he was the kindest and gentlest of men, and that every evening after jotting down his gloomy reflections he made up his accounts on ruled paper and knelt down to say his prayers. And what sufferings he underwent simply to appear to himself what he wanted to be! For his comrades and the soldiers were unable to regard him as he wanted them to. On one of his night expeditions with his companions he chanced to wound one of the hostile tribesmen in the foot with a bullet and took him prisoner. This man lived for seven weeks after this in the lieutenant's quarters, and the latter tended him and looked after him as though he had been his dearest friend, and when his wound was healed let him go loaded with presents. Later on, when on one of his expeditions the lieutenant was retreating in a line of scouts and firing to keep back the enemy, he heard one among them call him by his name and his wounded guest came forward and invited the lieutenant by

signs to do the same. The latter went forward to meet his visitor and shook hands with him. The mountaineers kept their distance and did not fire at him; but as soon as the lieutenant turned his horse several shot at him, and one bullet grazed him below the spine.

Another incident I saw myself. There was a fire in the fortress one night, and two companies of soldiers were engaged in putting it out. Suddenly the tall figure of a man on a coal-black horse appeared in the midst of the crowd, lighted up by the red glow of the fire. The figure pushed through the crowd and rode straight to the fire. Riding right up to it the lieutenant leaped off his horse and ran into the house, one side of which was in flames. Five minutes later he came out with his hair singed and a burn on his elbow, carrying in his coat two pigeons which he had rescued from the fire.

His surname was Rosenkranz; but he often talked of his origin, somehow tracing his descent from the Varengians, and proving unmistakably that he and his fathers before him were of the purest Russian blood

IV

The sun had passed the zenith and was casting hot rays across the baked air upon the parched earth. The dark blue sky was perfectly clear; only at the foot of the snow mountains whitish lilac clouds were beginning to gather. The still air seemed to be filled with a sort of transparent dust. It had become unbearably hot. When we had come half-way we reached a little stream where the troops halted. The soldiers, stacking up their rifles, rushed to the stream; the officer in command of the battalion sat down on a drum in the shade, and expressing in every feature of his face the full dignity of his grade, disposed himself for a meal with his officers The captain lay down on the grass under the company's baggage-wagon.

Gallant Lieutenant Rosenkranz and a few other young officers, squatting on outspread cloaks, were preparing for a carouse, as might be seen from the bottles and flagons set out around them and from the peculiar animation of the singers, who stood in a semi-circle round them, playing and whistling a Caucasian dancing-song to the tune of the Lesginka:

"Shamil plotted a rebellion
In the years gone by
Tri-ri, ra-ta-ti
In the years gone by."

Among these officers was the youthful ensign who had overtaken us in the morning. He was very amusing; his eyes were shining, his tongue faltered a little from time to time; he was longing to kiss everyone and to tell them all how he loved them. . . . . Poor boy! He had not learned yet that he might seem ridiculous in feeling so, that his frankness and the affectionateness with which he approached everybody might set other people jeering at him instead of giving him the affection he longed for so much. Nor did he know either that when he flung himself down on his cloak, and leaning on his arm tossed back his thick black hair, he was exceedingly charming.

Two officers were sitting under a wagon playing "fools," with a barrel for a card-table.

I listened with curiosity to the talk of the soldiers and the officers, and watched the expression of their faces attentively. But not in a single one of them could I discover a trace of the uneasiness I was feeling myself. Jokes, laughter, stories—all expressed the general carelessness and indifference to the danger before them. It was as though no one could conceive that some of them were destined not to come back along that road

V

At seven o'clock in the evening, dusty and weary, we entered the fortified gates of the fortress of N——. The sun was setting and casting a slanting pink light on the picturesque batteries of the fortress and its gardens full of tall poplars, on the tilled yellow fields, and on the white clouds, which, huddling about the snow mountains as though in mimicry, formed a chain as fantastic as beautiful. The new crescent moon looked like a transparent cloud on the horizon. In the Tatar village near the fortress, a Tatar on the roof of a hut was calling all the faithful to prayer. Our singers, with fresh energy and vigour, broke out again.

After resting and tidying myself up a little, I went to see an adjutant of my acquaintance to ask him to inform the general of my intentions. On the way from the outlying part of the town where I was staying I observed things I had not expected to find in the fortress of N——. An elegant victoria, in which I saw a fashionable hat and heard chatter in French, overtook me. From the open window of the commander's house floated the strains of some "Lizanka" or "Katenka" polka, played on a piano that was wretchedly out of tune. In the tavern by which I passed I saw several clerks sitting over glasses of beer with cigarettes in their hands, and I overheard one of them saying to the other: "Excuse me . . . but as regards politics, Marya Grigoryevna is our leading lady." A Jew, with bent figure and a sickly-looking face, wearing a shabby coat, was dragging along a squeaky, broken barrel-organ, and the whole suburb was echoing with the last bars of "Lucia." Two women with rustling skirts, silk kerchiefs on their heads, and bright-coloured parasols in their hands, swam by me on the wooden footpath. Before a low-pitched little house two girls, one in a pink and the other in a blue dress, stood with bare heads, going off into shrill artificial giggles, evidently in the hope of attracting the attention of officers as they walked

by. Officers in new coats, white gloves and dazzling epaulettes swaggered jauntily about the streets and the boulevard.

I found my acquaintance on the ground-floor of the general's house. I had only just had time to explain what I wanted, and he to reply that it could easily be managed, when an elegant carriage, which I had noticed at the entrance, rolled past the window at which we were sitting. A tall, well-built man, in an infantry uniform with the epaulettes of a major, got out of the carriage and went towards the general's.

"Ah, excuse me, please," said the adjutant, getting up, "I must go to tell the general."

"Who has come?" I asked.

"The countess," he answered, and buttoning up his uniform he ran upstairs.

A few minutes later a short but very handsome man, in a coat without epaulettes, with a white cross at his button-hole, came out on to the steps. Behind him came the major, the adjutant and two other officers. In the carriage, in the voice and in every gesture of the general one could see that he was a man well aware of his own great consequence.

"Bon soir, madame la comtesse," he said, putting his hand in at the carriage window.

A hand in a kid glove pressed his hand, and a pretty, smiling little face under a yellow hat appeared at the carriage window.

Of the conversation, which lasted several minutes, I only heard, in passing, the general say with a smile:

"Vous savez que j'ai fait vœu de combattre les infidèles, prenez donc garde de le devenir."

There was laughter in the carriage.

"Adieu donc, cher général."

"Non, à revoir," said the general, as he mounted the steps, "n'oubliez pas que je m'invite pour la soirée de demain."

The carriage rolled away.

"Here, again, is a man," I mused as I went back home, "who has everything a Russian can desire;

rank, wealth, distinction—and on the eve of a battle which will end, God only knows how, this man is jesting with a pretty woman and promising to drink tea with her next day, just as though he were meeting her at a ball!"

I met there, at the adjutant's, a man who amazed me even more. He was a lieutenant of the K. regiment, a young man of almost womanish timidity and gentleness. He had come to the adjutant to pour out his anger and indignation against the persons who had, he said, intrigued against his receiving a command in the coming action. He said it was disgusting to behave in such a way, that it was unworthy of comrades, that he should not forget it, etc. Intently as I watched the expression of his face and listened to the sound of his voice, I could not help believing that he was in earnest, that he was deeply hurt and disappointed at not being allowed to fire at Circassians and to expose himself to their fire. He was as sore as a child who has been unjustly whipped. . . . I was utterly unable to understand it all.

VI

The troops were to set off at ten o'clock in the evening. At half-past eight I mounted my horse and rode to the general's, but as I thought both he and the adjutant would be engaged, I waited in the street, tied my horse to the fence and sat down on a projecti g part of the wall, meaning to overtake the general as soon as he rode out.

The heat and glare of the sun had by now given place to the coolness of the night and the dim light of the new moon, which was beginning to set in a pale half-circle of light against the dark blue of the starry sky. Lights had begun to shine in the windows of houses and through the chinks in the shutters of the mud huts. The graceful poplars in the garden looked taller and blacker than ever standing up on the horizon

against the whitewashed huts with the moonlight on their thatched roofs. Long shadows of the houses, trees and fences lay picturesquely on the shining, light, dusty road. . . . By the river the frogs kept up an unceasing noise;[1] in the streets I could hear hurried footsteps and talk, and the tramp of a horse; from the suburb floated the sounds of a barrel-organ, first, "The Winds do Blow," then some "Aurora Waltz."

I will not describe my musings; in the first place, because I should be ashamed to confess the gloomy images which hovered in haunting succession before my heart, while I saw nothing but gaiety and cheerfulness around me; and secondly, because they do not come into my story. I was so absorbed in my thoughts that I did not even notice that the bell had struck eleven o'clock and that the general and his suite had ridden by me. The rearguard was already at the gates of the fortress. I had much ado to get over the bridge in the crush of cannon, caissons, baggage and officers loudly shouting instructions.

When I had ridden out of the gates, I trotted after the troops moving silently in the darkness and stretching over almost a verst of road, and overtook the general. Above the heavy artillery and horsemen drawn out in one long line, above, over the guns, the officers and men, like a jarring discord in a slow solemn harmony, rose a German voice, shouting:

"Antichrist, give me a linstock!" and a soldier hurriedly calling: "Shevchenko! the lieutenant's asking for a light!"

A great part of the sky was covered with long, dark grey clouds; stars shone dimly here and there between them. The moon had already sunk behind the near horizon of black mountains, visible on the right, and shed a faint tremulous twilight on their peaks in sharp contrast with the impenetrable darkness wrapped about their base. The air was warm

[1] The frogs in the Caucasus make a noise that has no resemblance to the croaking of Russian frogs.

and so still that it seemed as though not one blade of grass, not one cloud was stirring. It was so dark that one could not distinguish objects quite near at hand; at the sides of the road I seemed to see rocks, animals and strange figures of men, and I only knew they were bushes when I heard their rustling and felt the freshness of the dew with which they were covered. Before me I saw a compact heaving black mass followed by a few moving blurs; it was the vanguard of the cavalry with the general and his suite. A similar black mass was moving in the midst of us, but it was lower than the first; this was the infantry. So complete a silence reigned in the whole detachment that one could hear distinctly all the mingling sounds of the night, full of mysterious charm. The distant mournful howl of the jackals, sometimes like a wail of despair, sometimes like a chuckle, the shrill monotonous notes of the grasshopper, of the frog, of the quail, a vague approaching murmur, the cause of which I could not explain, and all those faintly audible night-movements of Nature, impossible to interpret or define, blended into one full melodious sound which we call the silence of the night. That silence was broken by, or rather mingled with, the dull thud of horses' hoofs and the rustle of the high grass under the slowly-moving detachment.

Only from time to time the rumble of a heavy gun, the jingling of bayonets, subdued talk, or the snort of a horse, was heard in the ranks.

All Nature seemed filled with peace-giving power and beauty.

Is there not room enough for men to live in peace in this fair world under this infinite starry sky? How is it that wrath, vengeance, or the lust to kill their fellow men, can persist in the soul of man in the midst of this entrancing Nature? Everything evil in the heart of man ought, one would think, to vanish in contact with Nature, in which beauty and goodness find their most direct expression.

VII

We had been marching more than two hours. I felt shivery and began to be sleepy. The same indistinct objects rose dimly in the darkness; at a little distance a wall of blackness with the same moving blurs; close beside me the haunches of a white horse which paced along switching its tail and straddling its hind legs; a black in a white Circassian coat against which a rifle in a black case and the white stock of a pistol in an embroidered cover showed up distinctly; the glow of a cigarette lighting up a flaxen moustache, a beaver collar and a hand in a wash-leather glove.

I was bending over my horse's neck, closing my eyes, and I kept losing myself for a few minutes, till suddenly the familiar rustle and thud would arouse me; I looked about me and it seemed as though I were standing still while the black wall facing me was moving upon me, or that that wall was standing still and I should ride against it in another moment. At one such instant of awakening that unaccountable continuous murmur, which seemed to come closer and closer, sounded more loudly than ever; it was the sound of water. We had entered a deep ravine and were close upon a mountain stream which was at that time overflowing its banks.[1] The murmur grew louder, the damp grass was thicker and higher, the bushes were closer, and the horizon narrower. Here and there, against the dark background of the mountains, bright fires flared up and died down again in an instant.

"Tell me, please, what are those lights?" I asked in a whisper of a Tatar riding beside me.

"Why, don't you know?" he answered.

"No, I don't."

"That's the mountaineer has tied straw to a stake and will wave the fire about," he said in broken Russian.

"What's that for?"

[1] The rivers in the Caucasus overflow their banks in July.

" That every man may know the Russian is coming. Now in the villages," he added, laughing, " aie, aie, there'll be a fine upset; everyone will be dragging his belongings into hiding."

" What! Do they know already in the mountains that the detachment is coming? " I asked.

" Aie! aie! To be sure he knows! He always knows! Our folks are like that."

" Is Shamil, too, preparing to fight then? " I asked.

" Nay," he answered, shaking his head. " Shamil is not going to come out to fight. Shamil will send his chiefs and look through a tube from up above."

" And does he live far away? "

" No, not far. Yonder to the left it will be ten versts."

" How do you know? " I asked him. " Have you been there? "

" I have. All of us have been in the mountains."

" And have you seen Shamil? "

" Pich! Shamil is not to be seen by us. A hundred, three hundred, a thousand guards are round him. Shamil will be in the middle! " he said with an expression of servile admiration.

Glancing upwards into the sky, which had grown clearer, one could already discern a light in the east, and the Pleiades were already sinking to the horizon; but in the ravine along which we were marching it was damp and dark.

Suddenly, a little in front of us, several little lights began to glimmer, and at the same instant bullets whizzed by us with a sharp ping, and in the stillness all around us we heard shots in the distance and a loud piercing shriek. It was the enemy's advance picket. The Tatars of whom it consisted halloed, fired at random, and scattered in all directions.

All was silent. The general summoned the interpreter. A Tatar in a white Circassian coat rode up to him and, gesticulating and whispering, talked to him about something for rather a long time.

" Colonel Hasanov, give the orders that the line

of scouts move into more open formation," said the general, in a quiet, drawling, but very distinct voice.

The detachment had reached the river. The black mountains of the ravine were left behind; it began to grow light. The sky, upon which the pale, dim stars were hardly visible, seemed to be higher; the red glow of dawn began gleaming in the east; a fresh penetrating breeze sprang up from the west, and a shimmering mist rose like steam over the noisy river.

VIII

The guide pointed out the ford; the vanguard of the cavalry and the general with his suite followed. The water rose breast-high about the horses and rushed with extraordinary force between the white stones, which, in some places, were visible at the surface, and formed swirling, foaming eddies round the horses' legs. The horses, startled by the noise of the water, threw up their heads and pricked up their ears, but stepped steadily and warily over the uneven bottom against the current. Their riders lifted up their legs and their guns. The infantry soldiers, wearing literally nothing but their shirts, held their muskets above the water with their clothes and their knapsacks slung upon them. The men linked themselves arm-in-arm in lines of twenty, and one could see, by the strained expression of their faces, the effort with which they withstood the current. The artillery riders, with a loud shout, urged their horses into the water at a trot. The cannon and the green caissons, over which the water splashed from time to time, rumbled over the stony bottom; but the sturdy Cossack horses, pulling all together, and churning the water into foam, with wet tails and manes struggled out on the other side.

As soon as the crossing was over the general's face suddenly showed a certain gravity and thoughtfulness. He turned his horse, and with the cavalry

trotted across a wide glade, shut in by woods, which stretched before us. The Cossack cavalry scouts scattered along the edge of the wood. We caught sight of a man on foot, in the wood, wearing a Circassian coat and cap; then a second . . . and a third. One of the officers said: "There are the Tatars." Then there was a puff of smoke from behind a tree . . . a shot . . . and another Our volleys drowned the sound of the enemy's firing. Only now and then a bullet whizzing by with a deliberate note like the sound of a bee showed that all the firing was not on our side. Then the infantry at a run, and the artillery at a quick trot, passed through the line of scouts. We heard the deep bass notes of the cannon, the metallic click of the ejected cartridges, the hissing of shells, the crack of the musketry. The cavalry, the infantry and artillery were to be seen on all sides of the glade. The smoke of the cannon, of the shells and of the muskets melted away in the greenness of the wood and mingled with the mist. Colonel Hasanov galloped up to the general and pulled his horse up sharply.

"Your Excellency," he said, raising his hand to his Circassian cap, "give the order for the cavalry to charge; there are the flags." And he pointed with his whip to some Tatars on horseback, before whom two men were riding with red and blue rags on sticks.

"Very well, Ivan Mihailovitch," said the general.

The colonel immediately wheeled his horse round, waved his sabre in the air and shouted:

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" rang out in the ranks, and the cavalry flew after him.

Everybody watched eagerly; there was one flag, then another, a third, and a fourth. . . .

The enemy did not await the attack; they vanished into the wood and opened fire from there. Bullets flew more thickly.

"Quel charmant coup d'œil!" said the general,

rising lightly in the saddle, in the English fashion, on his black slender-legged horse.

"Charmant," answered the major, rolling his rs, and flicking his horse with a whip he rode up to the general. "C'est un vrai plaisir que la guerre dans un aussi beau pays," he said.

"Et surtout en bonne compagnie," added the general with an affable smile.

The major bowed.

At that moment, with a rapid unpleasant hiss, one of the enemy's balls flew by, and something was hit; the moan of a wounded man was heard in the rear. This moan impressed me so strangely that all the charm of the picturesque battle scene was instantly lost for me; but no one but me apparently noticed it; the major seemed to be laughing with greater zest than ever; another officer finished a sentence he was uttering with perfect composure; the general looked in the opposite direction and said something in French with the serenest of smiles.

"Do you command us to answer their fire?" the officer in command of the artillery inquired, galloping up to the general.

"Yes, scare them a bit," the general assented carelessly, lighting a cigar.

The battery was drawn up and a cannonade began. The earth groaned at the sound; there was a continual flash of light, and the smoke, through which one could scarcely discern the moving figures of the gunners, blinded the eyes.

The Tatar village was shelled. Again Colonel Hasanov rode up, and at the command of the general dashed into the village. The battle-cry rang out again, and the cavalry disappeared in the cloud of dust which it raised.

The spectacle was truly magnificent. To me, taking no part in the action, and unaccustomed to such things, one thing spoilt the impression: the movement, the excitement and the shouting all seemed to me superfluous. I could not help thinking of a

man swinging his axe and hewing at the empty air.

IX

THE Tatar village had been taken by our troops, and not one of the enemy was left in it, when the general with his suite, to which I had attached myself, entered it.

The long clean huts, with their flat mud roofs and picturesque chimneys, were built upon uneven rocky crags, among which flowed a little stream. Upon one side lay green gardens lighted up by the brilliant sunshine and filled with huge pear trees and plum trees; on the other side loomed strange shadows—the tall, perpendicular stones of the graveyard, and tall wooden posts, adorned at the top with balls and different coloured flags. (These were the tombs of the *jigits*.)

The troops stood drawn up in order by the gate. A minute later the dragoons, Cossacks and the infantry, with evident delight, scattered among the crooked by-ways and the empty village was instantly full of life again. Here a roof was being broken down; we heard the ring of an axe against hard wood as a door was smashed in; in another place a haystack was blazing, a fence and a hut were on fire and the smoke rose in dense clouds into the clear air. Here a Cossack was hauling along a sack of flour and a rug. A soldier with a gleeful face was pulling a tin pan and a rag of some sort out of a hut; another was trying with outstretched arms to capture two hens which were cackling loudly and fluttering against a fence; a third had found somewhere a huge pot of milk; he drank from it, and then with a loud laugh flung it on the ground.

The battalion with which I had come from Fort N—— was also in the village. The captain was sitting on the roof of a hut and was puffing clouds of *Sambrotalik* tobacco smoke from a short pipe with

such an unconcerned air that when I caught sight of him I forgot that I was in an enemy's village and felt as though I were quite at home.

"Ah, you are here, too!" he said, observing me.

The tall figure of Lieutenant Rosenkranz darted hither and thither about the village; he was incessantly shouting commands and had the air of a man extremely worried about something. I saw him come out of a hut with a triumphant air; two soldiers followed him out, leading an old Tatar with his hands bound. The old man, whose whole attire consisted of a torn parti-coloured tunic and ragged breeches, was so decrepit that his bony arms, bound tightly behind his back, seemed to be coming off his shoulders, and his bare bent legs were scarcely able to move. His face, and even part of his shaven head, was deeply furrowed with wrinkles! his misshapen, toothless mouth surrounded by close-cropped grey moustaches and beard moved incessantly as though he were chewing something; but his red lashless eyes still had a gleam of fire and clearly expressed an old man's contempt of life.

Rosenkranz, through the interpreter, asked him why he had not gone away with the others.

"Where was I to go?" he said, looking calmly round him.

"Where the rest have gone," answered somebody.

"The *jigits* have gone to fight the Russians, but I am an old man."

"Why, aren't you afraid of the Russians?"

"What will the Russians do to me? I am an old man," he said again, glancing carelessly at the ring which had formed around him.

On the way back I saw the same old man without a cap, with his arms bound, jolting behind the saddle of a Cossack of the Line, and with the same unconcerned expression gazing about him. He was needed for the exchange of prisoners.

I clambered on to the roof and settled myself beside the captain.

"It seems there were but few of the enemy," I said to him, anxious to learn his opinion of what had just taken place.

"Enemy?" he repeated in surprise, "why, there were none at all. Do you call these the enemy? Wait till the evening and see how we get away. You'll see how they'll escort us home; how they'll spring up!" he added, pointing with his pipe to the copse which we had passed through in the morning.

"What is this?" I asked, uneasily, interrupting the captain, pointing to a little group of Don Cossacks which had formed round something not far from us.

We heard in their midst something like a child's cry, and the words:

"Don't stab it! Stop . . . they'll see us. . . . Have you a knife, Evstigneitch? Give us the knife."

"They're sharing something, the rascals!" said the captain, coolly.

But at that very moment, with a hot, scared face, the pretty ensign ran round the corner, and waving his arms, rushed at the Cossacks.

"Don't touch it! Don't kill it!" he screamed in a childish voice.

Seeing an officer the Cossacks gave way and set free a little white kid. The young ensign was completely taken aback, he muttered something, and with a shamefaced expression stopped short before it.

Seeing the captain and me on the roof he flushed more than ever and ran lightly towards us.

"I thought they were going to kill a baby," he said with a shy smile.

X

THE general with the cavalry had gone on ahead. The battalion with which I had come from Fort N—— formed the rearguard. The companies of Captain

Hlopov and Lieutenant Rosenkranz were retreating together.

The captain's prediction was completely justified; as soon as we entered the copse of which he had spoken we were continually catching glimpses, on both sides of the road, of mountaineers on horse and on foot. They came so near that I could distinctly see some of them bending down, musket in hand, running from tree to tree. The captain took off his cap and reverently made the sign of the cross. Several of the elder soldiers did the same. We heard calls in the wood, and shouts of "Iay, Giaour! Iay, Urus!" The short, dry musket-shots followed one another, and bullets came whizzing from both sides. Our men answered silently with a running fire; only from time to time one heard in the ranks exclamations such as: "Where's *he*[1] firing from?" "It's all right for *him* in the wood!" "We ought to use the cannon!" —and so forth.

The cannon were brought into line, and after a few shots from them the enemy seemed to weaken; but a minute later, at every step the troops advanced, the firing and the shouts and halloos were more incessant.

We had not gone more than six hundred yards from the village when the enemy's cannon-balls began to whistle over our heads. I saw a soldier killed by one of them . . . but why give the details of that awful scene when I would give a great deal to forget it myself?

Lieutenant Rosenkranz kept firing his own musket. He was not silent for a moment, and in a hoarse voice shouted to the soldiers, and kept galloping at full speed from one end of the line to the other. He was rather pale, which was extremely becoming to his martial countenance.

The pretty ensign was in ecstasy: his fine black eyes shone with daring; his lips wore a faint smile;

[1] The pronoun "he" is used by the Caucasian soldiers as the collective term for the enemy.

he was continually riding up to the captain and asking his permission to dash into the wood.

"We shall beat them back," he said persuasively; "we shall, really!"

"No need to," the captain answered briefly; "we have to retreat."

The captain's company took up their position at the edge of the wood, and, lying down, kept off the enemy with their fire. The captain, in his shabby coat and draggled cap, slackening the rein of his white horse, sat in silence, with his legs bent from the shortness of his stirrups. (The soldiers knew, and did their business so well that there was no need to give them instructions.) Only from time to time he raised his voice and called to men who had lifted up their heads. There was nothing martial about the captain's appearance; but there was so much genuineness and simplicity that it made an extraordinary impression upon me.

"That's true courage," was the thought that rose instinctively within me.

He was exactly as I had always seen him, the same calm movements, the same quiet voice, the same guileless expression on his plain but open face; only in the unusual alertness of his glance could one detect the intentness of a man quietly absorbed in the work before him. It is easy to say "the same as always," but how many shades of difference I have observed in other people; one tries to appear more composed than usual, another tries to be sterner, a third more cheerful; but one could see by the captain's face that he did not understand why one should try to appear anything.

The Frenchman who said at Waterloo, "La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas," and other heroes, especially French ones, who have delivered themselves of memorable utterances, were brave, and their utterances really are worth remembering. But between their bravery and the bravery of the captain there was this difference: that if, on any occasion whatso-

ever, some grand saying had stirred in my hero's soul, I am convinced that he would not have uttered it, in the first place, because he would have been afraid that in uttering the great saying he would be spoiling the great deed; and secondly, that when a man feels that he has the strength for a great action no word whatever is needed. This, to my thinking, is the peculiar and noble characteristic of Russian courage, and, that being so, how can a Russian help a pang at the heart when he hears among our young officers hackneyed French phrases that aim at the imitation of obsolete French chivalry?

Suddenly, on the side where the pretty ensign had been standing, was heard a shout of "hurrah!" neither loud nor unanimous. Looking in the direction of the shout I saw about thirty soldiers running laboriously over a ploughed field, with muskets in their hands and knapsacks on their backs. They kept stumbling, but still pushed on and shouted. In front of them the young ensign galloped, waving his sword.

They all vanished into the wood.

After a few minutes of shouting and musket fire a terrified horse ran out and soldiers appeared at the edge of the wood carrying the dead and the wounded; among the latter was the young ensign. Two soldiers were holding him up under the arms. He was as white as a handkerchief, and his pretty little head, on which only the faintest shadow of the martial elation of a moment before could be seen, seemed somehow fearfully sunk between his shoulders and drooping on his breast. Upon his white shirt, under his open coat, could be seen a small red spot.

"Oh, what a pity!" I said, instinctively turning away from this piteous sight.

"Of course it's a pity," said an old soldier who was standing beside me with a morose face, leaning on his musket. "He was afraid of nothing; how can anyone do so?" he added, looking intently at the wounded boy. "Still young and foolish—and so he has paid for it."

"Why, are you afraid then?" I asked.
"To be sure!"

XI

Four soldiers were carrying the ensign on a stretcher. A soldier from the fortress followed them, leading a thin, broken-down horse laden with two green boxes containing the surgical requisites. They were waiting for the doctor. The officers rode to the stretchers and tried to encourage and comfort the wounded boy.

"Well, brother Alanin, it will be some time before we dance with the castagnettes again," said Lieutenant Rosenkranz, going up to him with a smile.

He probably expected that these words would keep up the pretty ensign's courage; but as far as one could judge from the cold and mournful expression of the latter they did not produce the desired effect.

The captain, too, went up to him. He looked intently at the wounded boy and his usually unconcerned cool face expressed genuine sympathy.

"My dear Anatole Ivanovitch," he said in a voice full of affectionate tenderness, which I should never have expected of him, "it seems it was God's will."

The wounded boy looked round; his pale face was lit up by a mournful smile.

"Yes; I didn't obey you."

"Better say it was God's will," repeated the captain.

The doctor, who had arrived, took from the assistant some bandages, a probe, and other things, and turning up his sleeves with an encouraging smile went up to the ensign.

"Well, it seems they've made a little hole in a sound place," he said jokingly, in a careless tone; "show me."

The ensign obeyed; but in the expression with which he looked at the light-hearted doctor there was both wonder and reproach which the latter did not

observe. He began to probe the wound and examine it from all sides; but, losing patience, the wounded boy, with a heavy groan, pushed away his hand.

"Let me be," he said, in a voice scarcely audible. "Anyway I shall die."

With those words he sank upon his back, and five minutes later when I approached the group standing round him and asked a soldier how the ensign was, he answered me, "He's passing away."

XII

It was late when the detachment, formed into a wide column, marched, singing, up to the fortress. The sun had set behind the ridge of snow-mountains, and was shedding its last rosy light on a long filmy cloud which lingered on the clear limpid horizon. The snow-mountains were beginning to be veiled by a purple mist; only their topmost outlines stood out with marvellous clearness against the red glow of the sunset. The transparent moon, which had long been up, was beginning to turn white against the dark blue of the sky. The green of the grass and the trees was turning black and was drenched with dew.

The troops moved in dark masses with steady tramp through the luxuriant meadow. Tambourines, drums and merry songs were to be heard on all sides. The singer of the sixth company was singing at the top of his voice, and the notes of his pure deep tenor, full of strength and feeling, floated far and wide in the limpid evening air.

THE CANDLE: OR, HOW THE GOOD PEASANT OVERCAME THE CRUEL OVERSEER

"Ye have heard how it has been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, resist not evil."

This happened in the time of the masters.[1] Of masters there were different kinds. There were those who, remembering God and the hour of death, showed mercy to their serfs, and there were others—sheer brutes—who remembered neither. Of these overlords, the worst were those who had themselves been serfs—men who had risen from the mire to consort with princes. Life under them was the hardest of all.

Such an overseer was appointed to a seigniorial estate, the peasantry on which worked on the *barstchina*[2] system. The estate was a large and fine one, comprising as it did both meadow and forest land, as well as a good water supply. Both its owner and the peasantry were contented, until the former appointed one of his house-serfs from another estate to be overseer.

This overseer assumed office, and began to press the peasants hardly. He had a family—a wife and two married daughters—and meant to make money, by fair means or by foul, for he was both ambitious and thoroughly wicked. He began by compelling the peasants to exceed their tale of days under the *barstchina*, and, having started a brick factory, nearly worked the people (women as well as men) to death, that he might sell and make money by the bricks. Some of the peasants went to Moscow to complain to the owner of the estate, but their representations availed nothing. The owner sent his petitioners away empty-handed, and did nothing to check the

[1] *I.e.*, before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

[2] A system of forced labour—so many days per week—under which the peasants held their land.

overseer. Soon the overseer heard that the peasants had been to complain, and started to take vengeance upon them, so that their daily lot became worse than ever. Moreover, some of them were untruthful men, and began telling tales of one another to the overseer and intriguing among themselves, with the result that the whole district was set by the ears, and the overseer only grew the more cruel.

Things grew steadily worse, until at last the overseer was as much feared by the peasantry as though he had been a raging wild beast. Whenever he rode through the village, every man shrank away from him as from a wolf, and endeavoured at all costs to avoid his eye. The overseer saw this, and raged all the more because they feared him so. He flogged and overworked the peasants, and many a one suffered sore ill at his hands.

In time, however, it came to pass that the peasants became desperate at these villainies, and began to talk among themselves. They would gather together in some secluded spot, and one of the more daring of them would say, "How much longer are we going to put up with this brute who is over us? Let us end it, once and for all. It would be no sin to kill such a man."

Once the peasants had been told off to clear the undergrowth in the forest. It was just before the beginning of Holy Week, and when they gathered together for the mid-day meal they began to talk once more.

"How can we go on like this?" they said. "That man is driving us to desperation. He has so overworked us of late that neither we nor our women have had a moment's rest by day or night. Besides, if anything is not done exactly to his liking, he flies into a passion and beats us. Simon died from his flogging, and Anisim has just undergone torture in the stocks. What are we to look for next? That brute will be coming here this evening, and we shall feel the rough side of his tongue. Well, all we need do is to pull him from his horse, bash him over the head with an axe,

and thus end the whole thing. Yes, let us take the body somewhere, cut it up, and throw the limbs into the water. The only thing is—we must all be agreed, we must all stand together. There must be no treachery."

Vassili Minaeff was especially insistent in the matter, for he had a particular spite against the overseer. Not only did the latter flog him every week, but he had also carried off his wife to be his cook.

So the peasants talked among themselves, and in the evening the overseer arrived. He had hardly ridden up when he flew into a rage because the chopping had not been done to his liking. Moreover, in one of the piles of faggots he detected a hidden bough.

"I told you not to cut the lindens," he said. "Which of you has done this? Tell me, or I will flog the whole lot of you."

So, on his asking them again in whose tale of trees the linden had been included, the peasants pointed to Sidor; whereupon the overseer lashed him over the face till it was covered with blood, gave Vassili also a cut because his pile of faggots was too small, and rode off home again.

That evening the peasants collected together as usual, and Vassili said:

"What fellows you are! You are sparrows rather than men. You keep saying to one another, 'Stand ready, now, stand ready,' and yet, when the moment comes, you are every one of you afraid. That is just how the sparrows got ready to resist the hawk. 'Stand ready, now, stand ready — no betrayal of one another,' they said; and yet, when the hawk stooped, they scurried off into the nettle-bed, and the hawk took the sparrow he wanted, and flew off with it dangling in his talons. Then the sparrows hopped out again. 'Tweet, tweet!' they cried—and then saw that one of their number was missing. 'Which of us is gone?' they said. 'Oh, only little Vania. Well, it was fated thus, and he is paying for the rest of us.'

The same with you fellows, with your cry of 'No betrayal, no betrayal.' When that man hit Sidor you should have plucked up heart of grace and finished him. But no; it was, 'Stand ready, stand ready! No betrayal, no betrayal!' — and yet, when the hawk stooped, every man of you was off into the bushes."

The peasants talked more and more frequently on this subject, until they were quite prepared to make an end of the overseer.

Now, on the Eve of Passion Week he sent word to them that they were to hold themselves in readiness to plough the *barstchina* land for oats. This seemed to the peasants a desecration of Passion Week, and they gathered together in Vassili's backyard and debated the matter.

"If he has forgotten God," they said, "and orders us to do such things as that, it is our bounden duty to kill him. Let us do it once for all."

Just then they were joined by Peter Michieff. Peter was a peaceable man, and had hitherto taken no part in these discussions. Now, however, he listened, and then said:

"You are meditating a great sin, my brothers. To take a man's life is a terrible thing to do. It is easy enough to destroy another's life, but what about your own? If this man does evil things, then evil awaits him. You need but be patient, my brothers."

Vassili flew into a passion at these words.

"For you," he said, "there is but one consideration —that it is a sin to kill a man. Yes, of course it is a sin, but not in such a case as the present one. It is a sin to kill a *good* man, but what about a dog like this? Why, God has commanded us to kill him. One kills a mad dog for the sake of one's fellows. To let this man live would be a greater sin than to kill him. Why should he go on ruining our lives? No matter if we suffer for killing him, we shall have done it for our fellows, and they will thank us for it. Yours is empty talk, Michieff. Would it be a less sin, then, for us to

go and work during Christ's holy festival? Why, you yourself do not intend to go, surely?"

"Why should I *not* go?" answered Peter. "If I am sent to plough I shall obey. It will not be for myself that I shall be doing it. God will know to whom to impute the sin, and, for ourselves, we need but bear Him in mind as we plough. These are not my own words, brothers. If God had intended that we should remove evil by evil, He would have given us a law to that effect and have pointed us to it as the way. No. If you remove evil by evil, it will come back to you again. It is folly to kill a man, for blood sticks to the soul. Take a man's soul, and you plunge your own in blood. Even though you may think that the man whom you have killed was evil, and that thus you have removed evil from the world—look you, you yourselves will have done a more wicked deed than any one of his. Submit yourselves rather to misfortune, and misfortune will submit itself to you."

After this, the peasants were divided in opinion, since some of them agreed with Vassili, and some of them respected Peter's advice to be patient and refrain from sin.

On the first day of the festival (the Sunday) the peasants kept holiday, but in the evening the *starosta* arrived from the manor house with his messengers, and said:

"Michael Semenovitch, the overseer, has sent us to warn you that you are to plough to-morrow in readiness for the oat sowing."

So the *starosta* and his men went round the village and told all the peasants to go to plough next day—some of them beyond the river, and some of them starting from the highroad. The peasants were in great distress, yet dared not disobey, and duly went out in the morning with their teams, and started ploughing. The church bells were ringing to early mass, and all the world was observing the festival; but the peasants—they were ploughing.

The overseer awoke late that morning and went to

make his round of the homestead as usual. His household tidied themselves up and put on their best clothes, and, the cart having been got ready by a workman, drove off to church. On their return a serving-woman set out the *samovar*, the overseer returned from the farm, and everyone sat down to tea-drinking. That finished, Michael lighted his pipe and called for the *starosta*.

"You set the peasants to plough?" he asked.

"Yes, Michael Semenovitch."

"They all of them went, did they?"

"Yes, all of them, and I divided up the work myself."

"Well, you may have done that, but are they actually *ploughing?* That is the question. Go and see whether they are, and tell them that I myself am coming when I have had dinner. Tell them also that each two ploughs must cover a *dessiatin*, and that the ploughing is to be good. If I find anything done wrong I shall act accordingly, festival or no festival."

"Very good, Michael Semenovitch," and the *starosta* was just departing when Michael called him back. He called him back because he wanted to say something more to him, though he hardly knew how to do it. He hemmed and ha'ed, and finally said:

"I want you to listen, too, to what those rascals are saying of me. If you hear anyone abusing me, come and tell me all he said. I know those brigands well. They don't like work—they only like lying on their backs and kicking up their heels. Guzzling and keeping holiday, that is what they love, and they will think nothing of leaving a bit of land unploughed, or of not finishing their allotted piece, if I let them. So just you go and listen to what they are saying, and mark those who are saying it, and come and report all to me. Go and inspect things, report to me fully, and keep nothing back—those are your orders."

The *starosta* turned and went out, and, mounting his horse, galloped off to the peasants in the fields.

Now, the overseer's wife had heard what her husband had said to the *starosta*, and came to him to in-

tercede for the peasants. She was a woman of gentle nature, and her heart was good. Whenever she got an opportunity she would try to soften her husband and to defend the peasants before him.

So she came now to her husband, and interceded.

"My dearest Michael," she implored, "do not commit this great sin against the Lord's high festival, but let the peasants go, for Christ's sake."

But Michael disregarded what she said, and laughed at her.

"Has the whip become such a stranger to your back," he said, "that you are grown so bold as to meddle with what is not your business?"

"Oh, but, Michael dearest, I have had such an evil dream about you. Do listen to me, and let the peasants go."

"All I have to say to you," he replied, "is that you are evidently getting above yourself, and need a slash of the whip again. Take that!" And in his rage he thrust his glowing pipe-bowl against her lips, and, throwing her out of the room, bid her send him in his dinner.

Jelly, pies, *shtchi*[1] with bacon, roast sucking-pig, and vermicelli pudding—he devoured them all, and washed them down with cherry-brandy. Then, after dessert, he called the cook to him, set her down to play the piano, and himself took a guitar and accompanied her.

Thus he was sitting in high spirits as he hiccuped, twanged the strings, and laughed with the cook, when the *starosta* returned, and, with a bow to his master, began to report what he had seen in the fields.

"Are they ploughing, each man his proper piece?" asked Michael.

"Yes," replied the *starosta*, "and they have done more than half already."

"No skimping of the work, eh?"

"No, I have seen none. They are ploughing well, for they are afraid to do otherwise."

[1] Cabbage soup.

"And is the up-turn good?"

"Yes, it is quite soft, and scatters like poppy-seed."

The overseer was silent a moment.

"Well, and what do they say of me?" he went on presently. "Are they abusing me?"

The *starosta* hesitated, but Michael bid him tell the truth.

"Tell me everything," he said. "'Tis not your own words that you will be reporting, but theirs. Tell me the truth, and I will reward you; but screen those fellows, and I will show you no mercy—I will flog you soundly. Here, Katiushka! Give him a glass of *vodka* to encourage him."

The cook went and fetched a glassful and handed it to the *starosta*, whereupon the latter made a reverence to his master, drank the liquor down, wiped his mouth, and went on speaking.

"Anyway," he thought to himself, "it is not my fault that they have nothing to say in praise of him, so I will tell the truth since he bids me do so."

So the *starosta* plucked up courage and went on:

"They are grumbling, Michael Semenovitch. They are grumbling terribly."

"But what exactly do they say? Tell me."

"There is one thing they *all* of them say—namely, that you have no belief in God."

The overseer burst out laughing.

"Which of them say that?" he asked.

"They all do. They say, in fact, that you serve the Devil."

The overseer laughed the more.

"That is excellent," he said. "Now tell me what each of them *separately* has to say of me. What, for instance, does our friend Vassili say?"

The *starosta* had been reluctant hitherto to inform against his own friends, but between him and Vassili there was an old-standing feud.

"Vassili," he replied, "curses you worse than all the rest."

"Then tell me what he says."

"I am ashamed to repeat it, but he hopes you may come to a miserable end some day."

"Oh, he does, does he, that young man?" exclaimed the overseer. "Well, he won't ever kill me, for he will never get a chance of laying his hands upon me. Very well, friend Vassili, you and I will have a settling together. And what does that cur Tishka say?"[1]

"Well, no one says any good of you. They all curse you and utter threats."

"What about Peter Michieff? What did *he* say? I'll be bound the old rascal was another one of those who cursed me."

"No, but he was not, Michael Semenovitch."

"What *did* he say, then?"

"He was the only one of them who said nothing at all. He knows a great deal for a peasant, and I marvelled when I saw him to-day."

"Why so?"

"Because of what he was doing. The others marvelled at him too."

"What was he doing?"

"A most strange thing. He was ploughing the grass *dessiatin* by the Tourkin ridge, and as I rode up to him I seemed to hear someone singing in a low, beautiful voice, while in the middle of his plough-shaft there was something burning."

"Well?"

"This thing was burning like a little tongue of fire. As I drew nearer I saw that it was a five-copeck wax candle, and that it was fastened to the shaft. A wind was blowing, and yet the candle never went out."

"And what did he say?"

"He said nothing, except that when he saw me he gave me the Easter greeting, and then began singing again. He had on a new shirt, and sang Easter hymns as he ploughed. He turned the plough at the end of the furrow, and shook it, yet the candle never went out. Yes, I was close to him when he shook

[1] A rather broad passage is here omitted.

the clods off the plough and lifted the handles round. Yet, all the time that he was guiding the plough round, the candle remained burning as before."

"What did you say to him?"

"I said nothing, but some of the other peasants came up and began laughing at him. 'Get along with you!' they said. 'Michieff will take a century to atone for ploughing in Holy Week.'"

"And what did he say to that?"

"Only 'On earth peace, and goodwill toward men'; after which he bent himself to his plough, touched up his horse, and went on singing to himself in a low voice. And all the time the candle kept burning steadily and never went out."

The overseer ceased to laugh, but laid aside the guitar, bowed his head upon his breast, and remained plunged in thought.

He dismissed the cook and the *starosta*, and still sat on and on. Then he went behind the curtain of the bed-chamber, lay down upon the bed, and fell to sighing and moaning as a cart may groan beneath its weight of sheaves. His wife went to him and pleaded with him again, but for a long time he returned her no answer.

At last, however, he said, "That man has got the better of me. It is all coming home to me now."

Still his wife pleaded with him.

"Go out," she implored him, "and release the peasants. Surely this is nothing. Think of the things you have done and were not afraid. Why, then, should you be afraid of this now?"

But he only replied again, "That man has conquered me. I am broken. Go you away while you are yet whole. This matter is beyond your understanding."

So he remained lying there.

But in the morning he rose and went about his affairs as usual. Yet he was not the same Michael Semenovitch as before. It was plain that his heart had received some shock. He began to have fits of

melancholy, and to attend to nothing, but sat moodily at home. His reign did not last much longer. When the Feast of St Peter arrived the owner came to visit his estate. He called on his overseer the first day, but the overseer lay sick. He called on him again the second day, but still the overseer lay sick. Then the owner learnt that Michael had been drinking heavily, and deposed him from his stewardship. The ex-overseer still hung about the homestead, doing no work and growing ever more melancholy. Everything which he possessed he drank away, and descended even to stealing his wife's shawls and taking them to the tavern to exchange for drink. Even the peasants pitied him, and gave him liquor. He survived less than a year, and died at last of *vodka.*

THE GODSON

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." (Matt. v. 38, 39.)

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay." (Rom. xii. 19).

I

A poor peasant had a son born to him. Greatly delighted, he went off to a neighbour's to ask him to stand godfather; but the neighbour refused, since he was unwilling to stand godfather to a poor man's son. Then the father went to another neighbour with the same request, but this man too refused.

In fact, the peasant made the round of the village, but no one would stand godfather, and he was driven to pursue his quest elsewhere. On the way to another village he fell in with a chance wayfarer, who stopped when he met him.

"Good-day to you, friend peasant," he said. "Whither is God taking you?"

"He has just given me a child," replied the peasant, "that it may be a joy to me in my prime, a comfort to me in my old age, and a memorial to my soul when I am dead. Yet, because of my poverty, no one in our village will stand godfather, and I am just off to seek godparents elsewhere."

"Take myself as godfather," said the stranger.

The peasant was delighted, and, thanking him for the offer, inquired: "Whom, then, shall I ask to be godmother?"

"A merchant's daughter whom I know," replied the other. "Go to the town, to the stone building with the shops in it which fronts the square. Enter and ask the proprietor to give his daughter leave to stand godmother."

The peasant demurred to this.

"But, my good friend," he said, "who am I that

I should go and call upon a rich merchant? He will only turn away from me in disgust, and refuse his daughter leave."

"That will not be *your* fault. Go and ask him. Arrange the christening for to-morrow morning, and I will be there."

So the poor peasant returned home, first of all, and then set out to the merchant's in the town. He was fastening up his horse in the courtyard when the merchant himself came out.

"What do you want?" he said.

"This, sir," replied the peasant. "God has just given to me a child, that it may be a joy to me in my prime, a comfort to me in my old age, and a memorial to my soul when I am dead. Pray give your daughter leave to stand godmother."

"When is the christening to be?"

"To-morrow morning."

"So be it. God go with you. To-morrow my daughter will be at the christening Mass."

And, sure enough, on the following morning both the godfather and the godmother arrived, and the child was christened; but as soon as ever the christening was over, the godfather departed without revealing his identity, and they never saw him again.

II

The child grew up to be a delight to his parents, for he was strong, industrious, intelligent and peaceable. When he was ten years old his parents sent him to learn his letters, and he learnt in a year what others took five years to master. His education was soon completed.

One Holy Week the boy went as usual to visit his godmother and give her the Easter embrace. But when he had returned home he said:

"Dear father and mother, where does my godfather live? I should like to go and give him the Easter greeting."

But his father said: "We do not know, little son, where your godfather lives. We ourselves have often been troubled about that. Never since the day of your christening have we set eyes upon him, nor heard of him; so that we neither know where he lives nor whether he be alive at all."

Then the boy knelt down before his father and mother.

"Let me go and look for him, dear parents," he said. "I might find him and give him the Easter greeting."

So the father and mother gave their boy leave to go, and he set off in quest of his godfather.

III

LEAVING the hut, he started along the highroad, and had been walking about half the day when he met a stranger.

The stranger stopped.

"Good-day to you, my boy," he said. "And whither is God taking you?"

"This morning," answered the boy, "I went to visit my godmother and give her the Easter greeting, after which I returned home and asked my parents: 'Where does my godfather live? I should like to go and give him also the Easter greeting.' But my parents said to me: 'Little son, we do not know where your godfather lives. As soon as ever you had been christened he left our house, so that we know nothing about him nor whether he be alive at all.' Yet I felt a great longing to see my godfather, and now have come out to seek him."

Then the stranger said, "I am your godfather."

The boy was overjoyed, and straightway gave his godfather the Easter embrace.

"But where are you going now, dear godfather?" he asked. "If in our direction, come with me to our hut; and if to your own home, let me come with you."

"Nay, I have no time now to go to your home," replied his godfather, "for I have business to do in the villages; but I shall be back at my own home to-morrow, and you may come to me then."

"And how shall I find the way to you, dear godfather?"

"Walk straight towards the rising sun, and you will come to a forest, and in the middle of the forest to a clearing. Sit down there and rest yourself, and observe what happens in that spot. Then come out of the forest, and you will see in front of you a garden, and in that garden a pavilion with a golden roof to it. That is my home. Walk straight up to the garden gates, and I will meet you there."

Thus spake the godfather, and then vanished from his godson's eyes.

IV

So the boy went by the way that his godfather had told him. On and on he went, until he reached the forest, and then a little clearing in the middle of it. In the centre of this clearing stood a pine tree, to one branch of which a rope was fastened, and to the other end of the rope an oaken log some three *poods*[1] in weight. Exactly beneath the log there was placed a pail of honey. Just as the boy was wondering why the honey had been put there, there came a crackling sound from the forest, and he saw some bears approaching. In front walked the mother bear, behind her a young yearling bear, and behind him again three little bear cubs. The mother bear raised her muzzle and sniffed, and then made straight for the pail, with the young ones behind her. First she plunged her own nose into the pail, and then called the young ones. Up they ran, and fell to work on the honey; but their doing so caused the log to swing a little, and to thrust the cubs away as it swung back.

[1] The *pood* = 40 Russian pounds.

Seeing this, the old she-bear thrust it away again with her paw. It swung further this time, and, returning, struck two of the cubs—one of them on the head, and the other one on the back—so that they squealed and jumped aside. This angered the mother bear, and, raising both paws to the log, she lifted it above her head and flung it far away from her. High up it swung, and immediately the yearling bear leapt to the pail, buried his nose in the honey, and munched away greedily, while the cubs also began to return. Before, however, they had reached the pail the log came flying back, struck the yearling bear on the head, and killed him outright. The mother bear growled more fiercely than ever as she seized the log and flung it away from her with all her strength. Up, up it flew—higher than the branch itself, and well-nigh breaking the rope. Then the she-bear approached the pail, and the cubs after her. The log had gone flying upwards and upwards, but now it stopped, and began to descend. The lower it came, the faster it travelled. Faster and faster it flew, until it struck the mother bear and crashed against her head. She turned over, stretched out her paws, and died, while the cubs ran away.

V

THE boy marvelled at what he saw, and then went on until he came to a large garden, in the middle of which stood a lofty pavilion with a golden roof to it. At the entrance gates of the garden stood his godfather smiling, who greeted his godson, drew him within, and led him through the grounds. Never, even in a dream, had the boy seen such beauty and delight as were contained in that garden.

Next, his godfather conducted him into the pavilion, the interior of which was even more beautiful than the garden had been. Through every room did his godfather lead him—each one more magnificent, more enchanting than the last—until he had brought him to a sealed door.

"Do you see this door?" he said. "There is no lock upon it—only seals. Yet, although it can be opened, I bid you not do so. You may live here and play here, where you like and how you like, and enjoy all these delights; but this one charge do I lay upon you—that you do not enter that door. If ever you should do so, you will remember what you have so lately seen in the forest."

Thus his godfather spake, and disappeared. Left alone, his godson lived so happily and contentedly that he seemed only to have been there three hours when in reality he had been there thirty years. At the end of those thirty years the godson drew near to the sealed door and thought within himself, "Why did my godfather forbid me to enter that room? Suppose I go in now and see what it contains?"

So he pushed at the door, the seals parted, and the door flew open. As he entered he could see rooms larger and more splendid even than the others, and that in the midst of them there was set a golden throne. On and on he walked through those rooms, until he had come to the throne. Ascending the steps, he sat down upon it. Hardly had he done so when he perceived a sceptre resting against the throne. He took this sceptre into his hand—and lo! in a moment all the four walls of all the surrounding rooms had rolled away, and he could look right round him, and see the whole world at a glance and all that men were doing in it. In front of him he could see the sea and the ships sailing over it. To his right he could view the life of all foreign, non-Christian nations. To his left he could watch the doings of all Christian nations other than the Russian. And lastly, on the fourth side, he could behold how our own—the Russian—nation was living.

"Suppose," he said to himself, "I look to see what is happening in my own home, and whether the crop has come up well?"

So he looked towards his own native field, and saw sheaves standing there; whereupon he began to count

them, to see how many there were. While he was doing this he caught sight of a cart going across the field, with a peasant sitting in it. At first he thought it must be his father going to carry sheaves home by night, but when he looked again he saw that it was Vassili Kudnishoff, the thief, who was driving the cart. Up to the sheaves he drove, and began to load them on to the cart. The godson was enraged at this, and cried out: "Father dear! they are stealing sheaves from your field!"

His father awoke in the middle of the night. "Somehow I dreamt that my sheaves were being stolen," he said. "Suppose I go and look?" So he mounted his horse and set off. As soon as he came to the field he perceived Vassili there, and raised the hue and cry. Other peasants came, and Vassili was beaten, bound, and carried off to prison.

Next, the godson looked towards the town where his godmother was living, and saw that she was now married to a merchant. There she lay asleep, while her husband had got out of bed and was sneaking off to his paramour's room. So the godson cried out to the merchant's wife: "Arise! your husband is about an evil business."

His godmother leapt out of bed, dressed herself and went to look for her husband. She shamed him utterly, beat his paramour, and turned him out of doors.

Then the godson looked to see how his mother was faring, and saw her lying asleep in the hut. Presently a robber entered, and began to break open her strong-box. At this moment she awoke and cried out, whereupon the robber seized a hatchet, flourished it over her, and seemed on the point of killing her.

The godson could not restrain himself, but flung the sceptre towards the robber. Striking him right on the temple, it killed him on the spot.

VI

INSTANTLY that the godson had killed the robber the walls of the pavilion closed in again, and the place became as before.

Then the door opened, and the godfather entered. He went up to his godson, and, taking him by the hand, led him down from the throne.

"You have not obeyed my commands," he said. "One thing you have done which you ought not: you have opened the forbidden door. A second thing you have done which you ought not: you have ascended the throne and taken my sceptre into your hands. And a third thing you have done which you ought not: you have caused much evil in the world. Had you sat there but another hour you would have ruined the half of mankind."

Then the godfather led his godson back to the throne, and took the sceptre into his hands. Once again the walls rolled back, and all the world became visible.

"Look first at what you have done to your father," said the godfather. "Vassili lay for a year in prison, and there learnt every kind of villainy and became embittered against his fellow-man. Now, look you, he has just stolen two of your father's horses, and is at this very moment in the act of firing his farm also. That is what you have done to your father."

Yet, hardly had the godson perceived that his father's farm was blazing up before his godfather hid the spectacle from him and bade him look in another direction.

"Look there," he said. "It is just a year since your godmother was deserted by her husband for an unlawful love, and she has been driven by her grief to drink, and her husband's paramour to utter ruin. That is what you have done to your godmother."

Then this picture also was hid from the godson by his godfather as he pointed towards the godson's own home. In it sat his mother, weeping tears of

remorse for her sins and saying: "Far better had it been had the robber killed me, for then I should have sinned the less."

"That is what you have done to your mother," added the godfather. Then he hid this spectacle also from his godson, and pointed below it. There the godson saw the robber standing before a dungeon, with a warder holding him on either side.

And the godfather said to his godson: "This man has taken nine lives during his career. For those sins he would have had to atone had you not killed him. But now you have transferred those sins to yourself, and for them all you must answer. That is what you have done to *yourself*."

Then the godfather went on:

"The first time that the old she-bear pushed away the log, she only frightened her cubs a little. The second time that she pushed it away, she killed the yearling bear by doing so. But the third time that she pushed the log away, she killed herself. So also have you done. Yet I will set you now a term of thirty years in which to go forth into the world and atone for the sins of that robber. Should you not atone for them within that time, then it will be your fate to go where he has gone."

And the godson said: "In what manner shall I atone for his sins?"

To this the godfather replied: "When you have relieved the world of as much evil as you have brought into it, then will you have atoned for the sins of that robber."

"But in what manner," asked his godson again, "am I to relieve the world of evil?"

"Go you towards the rising sun," replied his godfather, "until you come to a field with men in it. Note carefully what those men do, and teach them what you yourself have learnt. Then go forward again, still noting what you see, and on the fourth day you will come to a forest. Within that forest there stands a hermit's cell, and in that cell there

lives an old man. Tell him all that has befallen you, and he will instruct you When you have done all that he bids you do, then will you have atoned both for the sins of that robber and for your own."

Thus spoke his godfather, and dismissed him from the entrance gates.

VII

THE godson went on and on, and as he walked he kept thinking to himself: "How am I to relieve the world of evil? The world relieves itself of evil by sending evil men into exile, by casting them into prison, by executing them upon the scaffold. How, then, will it be possible for me to rid the world of evil without taking upon myself the sins of others?"

Thus did he ponder and ponder, yet could not resolve the problem.

On and on he went, until he came to a field in which the corn had grown up rich and thick, and was now ready for the harvest. Suddenly he perceived that a calf had wandered into the corn, and that some peasants, having also seen it, had mounted their horses and were now chasing the calf from one side of the field to the other through the corn. Whenever the calf was on the point of breaking out of the corn a man would come riding up and the calf would double back in terror. Then once more the riders would go galloping about through the crop in pursuit of it. Yet all this time an old woman was standing weeping on the highway and crying out: "My calf is being driven to death!"

So the godson called out to the peasants:

"Why ride about like that? Come out of the corn, all of you, and then the old woman will call her calf back to her."

The peasants listened to his urging, and, advancing to the edge of the corn, the old woman cried aloud, "Here, here, little madcap! Come here, then!"

The calf pricked up its ears and listened. For a little while it listened, and then ran to the old woman and thrust its head against her skirt, almost pushing her from her feet. And it all ended in the peasants being pleased, and the old woman likewise, and the calf as well.

As the godson went on he thought to himself:

"I see now that evil cannot be removed by evil. The more that men requite evil, the more does evil spread. Thus it is manifest that evil is powerless against evil. Yet how to remove it I know not. It was pleasant to see the calf listen to the old woman's voice. Yet, had it not listened, how could she ever have recovered it from the corn?"

Thus the godson pondered and pondered as he went.

VIII

On and on he walked, until he came to a village, where he asked at the first hut for a night's lodging, and was admitted by the goodwife. She was all alone in the hut, and engaged in washing it and the furniture.

Having entered, the godson went quietly to the stove, and stood watching what the woman was doing. She had finished the floor and was now starting to wash the table. First of all she swilled it over, and then began wiping it with a dirty clout. She rubbed it vigorously one way, but still it was not clean, since the dirty clout left streaks upon its surface. Then she rubbed it the other way about, and cleared off some of the streaks, while making fresh ones. Lastly, she rubbed it lengthways, and back again, yet only with the result of streaking its surface afresh with the dirty clout. One piece of dirt might be wiped away here and there, yet others would be rubbed in all the firmer.

The godson watched her for a time, and at last said:

"My good woman, what are you doing?"

"Do you not see?" she said. "I am cleaning against the festival day, but, although I am tired out, I cannot get this table clean."

"But you should first of all rinse the clout, and *then* rub the table with it."

The woman did so, and very soon had the table clean.

"I thank you," she said, "for what you have taught me."

In the morning the godson took leave of his hostess, and went on. He walked and walked, until he came to a forest. There he saw some peasants bending felloes. The godson drew near them and saw that, however much they kept walking round the felloe-block, a felloe would not bend. So he watched them, and perceived that this was because the felloe-block kept turning with them, since it lacked a stay-pin. As soon as he saw this he said:

"My brothers, what are you doing?"

"We are bending felloes," they replied. "Twice have we soaked these felloes, and worn ourselves out, yet they will not bend."

"But you should first of all make fast the felloe-block," said the godson, "and then the felloe will bend as you circle round."

Hearing this, the peasants made fast the felloe-block, and thereafter their work prospered.

The godson spent the night with them, and then went on again. A whole day and a night did he walk, until just before dawn he came up with some cattle-drovers, and lay down beside them. He saw that they had picketed their cattle and were now trying to light a fire. They kept taking dry twigs and setting fire to them, yet the flames had no sooner sprung up than they put wet brushwood upon them. The brushwood only gave a hiss, and the flames went out. Again and again the drovers took dry twigs and lit them, yet always piled wet brushwood on the top, and so extinguished the flames. For a long time they

laboured at this, yet could not make the fire burn up.

At length the godson said, "Do not be so hasty in piling on the brushwood. First draw up the fire into a good flame. When it is burning fiercely, *then* put on the brushwood."

The drovers did so. First of all they drew up the flames to a good heat, and then applied the brushwood, so that the latter caught successfully, and the whole pile burst into a blaze.

The godson stayed with them for a while, and then went on again. He kept wondering and wondering why he should have seen these three incidents, yet could not discern the reason.

IX

For the whole of that day he pressed on, until he came to the forest in which stood the hermit's cell. He approached the cell and knocked at the door, whereupon a voice from within called out to him: "Who is there?"

"A great sinner," replied the godson, "who has come hither to atone for the sins of another."

Then an old man came out and asked him further: "What sins of another are those which have been laid upon you?"

So the godson told him all—about his godfather, and the bear and her young, and the throne in the sealed room, and the command which his godfather had given him, and the peasants whom he had seen in the field, and their trampling of the corn, and the calf running to the old woman of its own accord.

"It was then," said the godson, "that I understood that evil cannot be removed by evil. Yet still I know not how to remove it. I pray you, teach me."

And the old man said: "Yet tell me first what else you have seen by the wayside as you came."

So the godson told him about the woman and the

washing of the table, as also about the peasants who were bending felloes and the drovers who were lighting a fire. The old man heard him out, and then, turning back into the cell, brought out thence a little notched axe.

"Come with me," he said.

He went across the clearing from the cell, and pointed to a tree.

"Cut that down," he said.

So the godson applied the axe until the tree fell.

"Now split it into three."

The godson did so. Then the old man went back to the cell, and returned thence with a lighted torch.

"Set fire," he said, "to those three logs."

So the godson took the torch, and set fire to the three logs, until there remained of them only three charred stumps.

"Now, bury them half their length in the ground. So."

The godson buried them as directed.

"Under that hill," went on the old man, "there runs a river. Go and bring thence some water in your mouth, and sprinkle these stumps with it. Sprinkle the first stump even as you taught the woman in the hut. Sprinkle the second one even as you taught the felloes-makers. And sprinkle the third one even as you taught the drovers. When all these three stumps shall sprout, and change from stumps to apple trees, then shall you know how evil may be removed from among men, and then also will you have atoned for your sins."

Thus spoke the old man, and retreated to his cell again, while the godson pondered and pondered, and yet could not understand what the old man had said to him. Nevertheless, he set about doing as he had been bidden.

X

Going to the river, and taking a full mouthful of water, he returned and sprinkled the first stump. Again,

and yet again, he went, and sprinkled the other two. Now he began to feel tired and hungry, so he went to the cell to beg bite and sup of the old man; yet, hardly had he opened the door, when he saw the old man lying dead across his praying-stool. The godson looked about until he found some dry biscuits, which he ate. Then he found also a spade, and began to dig a grave for the old man. By night he brought water and sprinkled the stumps, and by day he went on digging the grave. Just when he had finished it and was about to bury the old man, some peasants from a neighbouring village arrived with presents of food for the aged hermit.

Learning that the old man was dead, and believing that he had blessed the godson as his successor, they helped to inter the body, left the food for the godson's use, and departed after promising to bring him some more.

So the godson lived in the old man's cell, subsisting upon food brought him by the people, and doing as he had been bidden—that is to say, bringing water in his mouth from the river and sprinkling with it the stumps.

He lived thus for a year, and many people began to come to him, since it had got abroad that a holy man was living the devout life in the forest who brought water in his mouth from under the hill to sprinkle with it three charred stumps. Very many folk visited him, and even rich merchants brought presents, but the godson would accept nothing for himself beyond necessaries. All other things which were given him he handed to the poor.

Thus his order of life became as follows. Half the day he would spend in fetching water in his mouth for the sprinkling of the stumps, and the other half he would spend in resting or receiving visitors. In time he began to believe that this must really be the way in which it was appointed him to live, and that by this very mode of life he would succeed both in removing evil from the world and in atoning for his own sins.

A second year passed without his once omitting, or any single day, to sprinkle the stumps: yet none of the three had yet begun to sprout.

Once he was sitting in his cell, when he heard a man ride by on horseback, singing to himself as he went. Going out to see what manner of man this was, the godson beheld a fine, strong young man, well-dressed, and mounted on a valuable horse and saddle. So the godson hailed him, and asked him what his business was, and whither he was going. The man drew rein.

"I am a highwayman," he said, "and ride the roads and kill people. The more I kill, the merrier is my singing."

The godson was horrified, and thought to himself: "How am I to remove the evil that must lie in such a man? It is easy for me to counsel those who visit me, because they are themselves repentant, but this man glories in his wickedness."

However, he said nothing, but went on reflecting as he walked beside the man:

"What is to be done now? If this highwayman takes to riding this way, he will frighten the people, and they will cease to visit me. What use will it be for me then to go on living here?"

So he stopped, and said to the highwayman:

"People come here to visit me—not to glory in their wickedness, but to repent and to pray for their sins' forgiveness. Do you also repent if you have any fear of God. But, if you will not, then ride the roads elsewhere, and never come this way again, so that you may not trouble my peace and terrify the people. Should you not hearken to me, assuredly God will chastise you."

The highwayman laughed.

"I neither fear God nor will listen to *you*," he said. "You are not my master. *You* live by your prayers and piety, and *I* by murder. Everyone must live somehow. Do you go on with your teaching of the old women who come to you, but do not attempt to

teach *me*. Yet because you have reminded me of God this day, I will kill two people the more to-morrow. I would have killed you yourself this instant, but that I do not wish to soil my hands. For the rest, keep out of my way."

Having uttered these threats, the highwayman rode away. Yet he came no more in that direction, and the godson went on living quietly as of old for another eight years.

XI

One night the godson had been sprinkling the stumps, and then returned to his cell to sit and rest a while. As he sat there he kept looking along the little forest path to see if any of the peasants were coming to visit him. Yet none came that day, and the godson sat alone until evening. Growing weary, he began to think over his past life. He remembered how the highwayman had reproached him for living by his piety, and began to recall his whole career.

"I am not living as God meant me to," he thought. "The old man laid upon me a penance, but that penance I have turned into a source both of bread and of public repute. I have been so led into temptation by it that I find time hang heavy on my hands if no visitors come. Yet, when they come, I am pleased only if they extol my piety! It is not thus that I must live. I have been led astray by the praise of men. So far from atoning for my past sins, I have been incurring new ones. I will go away into the forest—away to some new spot where the people cannot find me, and there I will live entirely alone, so that I may both atone for my past sins and incur no fresh ones."

Thus the godson pondered in his heart. Then he took a little bag of biscuits and the spade, and set out from the cell towards a ravine, in some remote corner of which he hoped to dig for himself an earthen hut, and so hide himself from the people.

As he was walking along with the bag of biscuits and the spade, there came riding towards him the highwayman. The godson was afraid, and tried to flee, but the highwayman overtook him.

"Whither are you going?" asked the brigand.

The godson replied that he wished to hide himself in some spot where no one could visit him. The highwayman was surprised at this.

"But how will you subsist," he asked, "when no one can come to visit you?"

The godson had not thought of this before, but as soon as the highwayman put the question he remembered the matter of food.

"Surely God will give me the wherewithal," he replied.

The highwayman said nothing more, but started to ride on his way.

"What can I be thinking of?" said the godson suddenly to himself. "I have said not a word to him about his mode of life. Maybe he is repentant now. He seemed softened to-day, and never once threatened to kill me."

So he called after the highwayman:

"Yet I beseech you to repent, for never can you escape God."

Upon this the highwayman turned his horse, seized a dagger from his belt, and brandished it at the godson, who straightway fled in terror into the forest. The highwayman did not pursue him, but said:

"Twice now have I let you go, old man; but the third time, look to yourself, for I will kill you."

This said, he rode away.

That evening the godson went to sprinkle the stumps as usual—and, behold! one of them had put forth shoots, and a little apple tree was growing from it!

XII

So the godson hid himself from men, and entered upon a life wholly solitary. When his small stock of biscuits

came to an end he bethought him: "I must go out and search for roots." Yet, hardly had he set forth upon this quest, when he saw hanging from a bough in front of him a little bag of biscuits. He took them down and ate them. No sooner had he done so than he saw another little bag hanging on the same bough.

Thus the godson lived on, with no anxieties to trouble him, save one—fear of the highwayman. Whenever he heard him coming he would hide himself, thinking: "If he were to kill me I should die with my sins unpurged."

He lived in this manner for ten years. The apple tree on the one stump grew apace, but the other two stumps remained as they had always been.

One day he rose early, and went out to perform his task of sprinkling the stumps. He had done this, when he felt weariness overcome him, and sat down to rest. As he sat resting there, the thought occurred to him: "Surely I have sinned the more, since now I have begun to fear death. Yet it may be that it is by death itself that God means me to atone for my sins."

Hardly had he thought this, when of a sudden he heard the highwayman riding towards him, and cursing as he came. As soon as he heard him the godson thought: "None but God Himself can work me weal or woe," and so went straight to meet the robber.

Then he saw that the highwayman was not riding alone, but was carrying a man behind him, and that the man's hands were bound and his mouth gagged. The man could utter no word, but the highwayman was cursing him without ceasing. The godson advanced towards them, and stood in the horse's path.

"Whither are you carrying this man?" he said.

"Into the forest," replied the highwayman. "He is a merchant's son, and refuses to say where his father's money is concealed, so I am going to flog him until he tells me."

And the highwayman tried to ride on, but the god-

son seized his bridle, and would not let him pass. "Let the man go," he said.

The highwayman was enraged at this, and shook his fist at the godson.

"Do you want the same as he?" he asked him. "I promised you long ago that I would kill you. Let me pass."

But the godson felt no fear now.

"I will *not* let you pass," he said. "I fear not you, but only God, and God has bidden me detain you. Let this man go."

The highwayman knit his brows, then seized his dagger, cut the bonds, and released the merchant's son.

"Away with you both," he said, "and never cross my path again."

The merchant's son leapt to the ground and fled, but when the highwayman tried to ride on again the godson still detained him, and told him that he must abandon his wicked life. The highwayman sat quietly listening, but said nothing in reply, and then departed.

In the morning the godson went to sprinkle the stumps as usual—and behold! another one of them had sprouted, and from it a second little apple tree was growing.

XII

ANOTHER ten years passed, and one day, as he was sitting free from anxiety or fear of any kind, and with his heart light within him, the godson thought to himself: "What blessings are given to men by God! Yet they vex themselves in vain when all the time they should be living in peace."

He thought of the vast sum of human wickedness, and how men distressed themselves to no purpose. And he felt a great pity for men.

"I ought not to be living thus," he thought. "Rather ought I to go forth and tell men what I know."

Just as this had passed through his mind he heard once more the highwayman approaching. At first he was for avoiding the brigand, thinking: " It is bootless to say anything to this man."

Thus he thought at first, but presently he changed his mind, and stepped forth into the road. The highwayman was riding along with downcast mien and with his eyes fixed upon the ground. As the godson looked upon him he felt a great pity for him, and, running to his side, clasped him by the knee.

" Dear brother," he cried, " have mercy upon your own soul, for in you too there dwells a God-given spirit. If you continue thus to torment yourself and to torment others, assuredly worse torments than all await you. Yet think how God yearns towards you, and what blessings He has laid up for you! Do not destroy yourself, my brother, but change your way of life."

But the highwayman only frowned and turned away. " Leave me," he said.

Yet the godson clasped him still closer by the knee, and burst into tears.

At that the highwayman raised his eyes and looked at the godson. He looked and looked, and then suddenly slid from his horse and threw himself upon his knees on the ground.

" Old man," he said, " you have overcome me at last. Twenty years have I striven with you, but you have gradually taken away my strength, until now I am not master of myself. Do what you will with me. The first time that you pleaded with me I was but the more enraged. It was not until you withdrew from the eyes of men, and recognised that you needed not their help, that I began to think over your words. But from that moment I began to hang the bags of biscuits for you on the bough."

Then the godson remembered how it was only when the clout was rinsed that the table was cleaned. Even so, he saw it was only when he had ceased to take thought for himself that his heart had been

purified, and he had been able to purify the hearts of others.

And the highwayman went on:

"But the first real change of heart took place in me when you ceased to fear death at my hands."

Instantly the godson remembered that it was only when the felloes-makers had fastened firmly the felloes-block that they had been able to bend the felloes. Even so, he saw it was only when he had established firmly his life in God and humbled his presumptuous heart that he had ceased to have any fear of death.

"And," said the highwayman, in conclusion, "it was when your heart went out to me in pity, and you wept before me, that my own heart was changed entirely."

Rejoicing greatly, the godson led the highwayman to the spot where the three stumps were—and behold! from the third stump also an apple tree had sprouted!

Then the godson remembered that it was only when the drovers' fire had kindled to a blaze that the wet brushwood had kindled with it. So also, he saw, had his heart within him kindled to a blaze, and with its flame had set fire to the heart of another.

With joy he recognised that his sins were at last redeemed.

All this he related to the highwayman and died. The highwayman laid him in his grave, and lived thereafter as the godson had bidden him, and taught men to do likewise.

CRŒSUS AND SOLON

In olden times—long, long before the coming of Christ—there reigned over a certain country a great king called Crœsus. He had much gold and silver, and many precious stones, as well as numberless soldiers and slaves. Indeed, he thought that in all the world there could be no happier man than himself.

But one day there chanced to visit the country which Crœsus ruled a Greek philosopher named Solon. Far and wide was Solon famed as a wise man and a just; and, inasmuch as his fame had reached Crœsus also, the king commanded that he should be conducted to his presence.

Seated upon his throne, and robed in his most gorgeous apparel, Crœsus asked of Solon: "Have you ever seen aught more splendid than this?"

"Of a surety have I," replied Solon. "Peacocks, cocks, and pheasants glitter with colours so diverse and so brilliant that no art can compare with them."

Crœsus was silent as he thought to himself: "Since this is not enough, I must show him something more, to surprise him."

So he exhibited the whole of his riches before Solon's eyes, as well as boasted of the number of foes he had slain, and the number of territories he had conquered. Then he said to the philosopher:

"You have lived long in the world, and have visited many countries. Tell me whom you consider to be the happiest man living?"

"The happiest man living I consider to be a certain poor man who lives in Athens," replied Solon.

The king was surprised at this answer, for he had made certain that Solon would name him himself; yet, for all that, the philosopher had named a perfectly obscure individual!

"Why do you say that?" asked Crœsus.

"Because," replied Solon, "the man of whom I speak has worked hard all his life, has been content with little, has reared fine children, has served his city honourably, and has achieved a noble reputation."

When Crœsus heard this he exclaimed:

"And do you reckon my happiness as nothing, and consider that I am not fit to be compared with the man of whom you speak?"

To which Solon replied:

"Often it befalls that a poor man is happier than a rich man. Call no man happy until he is dead."

The king dismissed Solon, for he was not pleased at his words, and had no belief in him.

"A fig for melancholy!" he thought. "While a man lives he should live for pleasure."

So he forgot about Solon entirely.

Not long afterwards the king's son went hunting, but wounded himself by a mischance, and died of the wound. Next, it was told to Crœsus that the powerful Emperor Cyrus was coming to make war upon him.

So Crœsus went out against Cyrus with a great army, but the enemy proved the stronger, and, having won the battle and shattered Crœsus' forces, penetrated to the capital.

Then the foreign soldiers began to pillage all King Crœsus' riches, and to slay the inhabitants, and to sack and fire the city. One soldier seized Crœsus himself, and was just about to stab him, when the king's son darted forward to defend his father, and cried aloud:

"Do not touch him! That is Crœsus, the king!"

So the soldiers bound Crœsus, and carried him away to the Emperor; but Cyrus was celebrating his victory at a banquet, and could not speak with the captive, so orders were sent out for Crœsus to be executed.

In the middle of the city square the soldiers built a great burning-pile, and upon the top of it they placed King Crœsus, bound him to a stake, and set fire to the pile.

Crœsus gazed around him, upon his city and upon

his palace. Then he remembered the words of the Greek philosopher, and, bursting into tears, could only say:

"Ah, Solon, Solon!"

The soldiers were closing in about the pile when the Emperor Cyrus arrived in person to view the execution. As he did so he caught these words uttered by Crœsus, but could not understand them.

So he commanded Crœsus to be taken from the pile, and inquired of him what he had just said. Crœsus answered:

"I was but naming the name of a wise man—of one who told me a great truth—a truth that is of greater worth than all earthly riches, than all our kingly glory."

And Crœsus related to Cyrus his conversation with Solon. The story touched the heart of the Emperor, for he bethought him that he too was but a man, that he too knew not what Fate might have in store for him. So in the end he had mercy upon Crœsus, and became his friend.

NEGLECT A FIRE, AND 'TWILL NOT BE QUENCHED

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

(Matt. xviii. 21-35.)

In a certain village there lived a peasant named Ivan Shtchevbakoff. He lived comfortably enough, for he himself was strong and the best worker in the village, and, moreover, he had three sons of full age. One of these sons was married, another one engaged to be married, and the third one a youngster old enough to look after the horses and to have begun to learn to

plough. Likewise, Ivan's wife was a sensible, managing woman, and his daughter-in-law had proved herself a peaceable, hard-working girl. So he and his family did very well. The only mouth in the homestead that did not feed itself was that of the old father, who suffered from asthma, and had now been lying seven years by the stove. Ivan possessed plenty of stock—three mares and their foals, a cow with a weaning calf, and fifteen sheep—and, while the women of the family made boots for the household, sewed the men's clothing, and helped in the fields, the men of the family did the rough work of a peasant's life. If the stock of grain gave out before the next harvest was due, the sale of a few sheep soon put the family's requirements to rights; so that, what with one thing and what with another, the household did well.

Unfortunately, however, there lived next door to them a certain Gabriel Chromoi,[1] the son of Gordei Ivanoff, and between him and Ivan there arose a feud.

So long as old Gordei—this Gordei's father—had been alive, and Ivan's father still ruled the roost at Ivan's place, the two households had lived on neighbourly terms. If the women had need of a sieve or a bucket, or the men of an axle-tree or a wheel, the one household would send and borrow them of the other, and help each other as neighbours should do. Again, if a calf strayed from its rightful premises into the other family's threshing-floor, it would merely be driven out again with the request, "Please do not let your calf stray here, for we have not yet stacked our rick." But as for filching anything from one another, or for shutting up anything belonging to the other in barn or stable, such things were unknown in either establishment.

That is how things were in the time of the old men; but when their sons came to be master things were otherwise.

It all arose from a trifle.

[1] Chromoi = *i.e.*, the Lame.

A young pullet belonging to Ivan's daughter-in-law began to lay early. In fact, the young woman was collecting eggs even before Holy Week, and went every day to the shed, where she would find an egg laid in the wagon. But one day, it appeared, the children frightened the pullet, so that she flew over the fence into the neighbours' yard, and laid there. The young woman heard the cackling, but thought to herself, "I have no time to get the egg now, for I have so much to get ready for the festival. I will go at supper-time and fetch it."

So in the evening she went to the wagon under the shed—but there was no egg there. She asked her mother- and brothers-in-law if they had taken it, but they said no. Tarass, the youngest one, added, "The pullet must have laid in the neighbours' yard, for I heard her cackling there, and saw her fly back again."

So the young woman went to look for the pullet, and found her roosting on the beam with the cock. Her eyes were closing already, and she was preparing for her night's rest. The young woman would have asked her where she had laid if it had been possible for the pullet to answer, but, as it was, she went round to the neighbours', and was met at the door by the old woman.

"What do you want, my girl?" she asked.

"Only this, grandmother, that my pullet flew over into your place to-day, and we think she must have laid an egg there."

"We haven't seen it, then. We have our own eggs, and God sent that they were laid hours ago. All those that we collected were our own, and we have no need of other people's. We do not go collecting eggs in yards which don't belong to us, my girl."

The young woman was greatly offended at this, and said the unnecessary word. Her neighbour capped this with two more, and in a moment they were at it hammer and tongs. Presently Ivan's wife came out with a bucket of water, and of course joined in the fray. Next, Gabriel's wife ran out of the door, and gave her

neighbours the rough side of her tongue, regardless of what was fact and what was fiction. In short, there was a general uproar. Everyone shouted at the top of her voice, gabbling two words to the other's one, and every word a term of abuse. "You are this!" could be heard, or "You are that!" "You are a thief and a slut!" "May you and your father-in-law die of the plague together!" and "You are a cadger of other people's things!" were some of the other expressions used.

"You everlasting borrower, you have worn my sieve simply to shreds!" would cry one of the women.

"Well, you have got our yoke in your place at this moment," would retort the other. "Give us back our yoke at once."

So, wrangling about the yoke, they managed to upset the water, tore each other's clothes, and came in good earnest to blows, At this moment Gabriel arrived from the field, and took his wife's part, whereupon Ivan and one of his sons issued from the other hut, and likewise swelled the tumult. Ivan was a muscular peasant, and thrust everyone aside. Eventually other peasants came running in to part the combatants, but not before Ivan had torn out a handful of Gabriel's beard.

That was how it all began. Gabriel wrapped his tuft of beard in newspaper, and went off to institute proceedings in the district court.

"I did not grow that piece of beard," he said, "for any tow-headed Ivans to pull out."

As for his wife, she did not let her neighbours forget that Ivan would assuredly be convicted and sent to Siberia.

So the feud went on.

Yet from the very first day the old man by the stove preached to them reconciliation. Yet the young people would not listen to him.

"You are acting foolishly, my children," he said. "You are making a great matter out of a trifle. Bethink yourselves—the whole affair has arisen out of an

egg—an egg that was run off with only by the little bairns! One egg is no great loss. Yet, although you have spoken in enmity, there is yet time to smooth it away and to learn better things. So long as you remain at variance you remain in sin. It must always be so. Go, then, and ask pardon of one another, and let our houses have but one roof again. If you harbour malice it cannot but be the worse for you as time goes on."

But the young people would not listen to him, for they thought that he did not understand the matter, and that he spoke with the garrulity of an old man.

Ivan also would not cry quits with his neighbour.

"I did not tear his beard," he declared. "He tore it out himself. On the other hand, he *did* tear the skirts of my blouse, not to speak of my shirt. Just look at it!"

So Ivan instituted proceedings in *his* turn, and the matter came before both the local and the district courts. While the case was still pending, a linch-pin chanced to disappear from Gabriel's cart. For this his womenkind blamed one of Ivan's sons.

"We saw him pass the window last night," they declared, "and go in the direction of the cart. Besides, a neighbour has given us the word that he went to an inn last night and pawned a linch-pin with the innkeeper."

So another suit was instituted, and every day there would be quarrels and fighting between the two huts. Even the children got set by the ears, in imitation of their elders, while the women could never meet by the brook without falling to with their rolling-pins and showering abuse—most evil abuse—upon one another.

In time these peasants went on from making accusations against one another to filching each other's property whenever they were short of anything. The women and children learnt to do likewise, and things went from bad to worse. Ivan and Gabriel brought constant suits against one another, both at parish assemblies and before the local and district courts,

until everyone was sick to death of their quarrels. One day Gabriel would have Ivan fined or imprisoned, and the next day Ivan would do the same by Gabriel. The more they hurt one another, the more embittered they grew. We all know that when dogs fight, they fight the more furiously if struck, for the one struck thinks that it is the other one biting him, and hangs on the more determinedly. In the same way these two peasants would sue each other, and one of them be punished with fine or imprisonment—with the result that the enmity of the pair would be more deadly even than before. "Wait a little, and I will be even with you!" was their mutual attitude.

Things went on thus for six years. Yet the old man by the stove never altered his advice.

"What are you doing, my children?" he would say. "Have done with old scores, and let the matter drop. Cease to be bitter against these neighbours of ours, and all will go well with you. On the other hand, the longer you cherish your bitterness the worse will things become.'

Yet they would not listen to the old man.

In the seventh year of the feud matters were brought to a head by Ivan's daughter-in-law putting Gabriel to shame before the whole company at a wedding-feast by accusing him of horse-stealing. Gabriel was drunk at the time, and not master of himself, so that he struck the woman—struck her with such clumsy aim, moreover, that she was laid in bed for a week, for she was pregnant. Ivan was overjoyed at this, and at once set off to the public prosecutor with an indictment, thinking: "Now at last I shall get rid of this precious neighbour of mine. He is bound to get either prison or Siberia." Yet his plea did not wholly succeed, for the public prosecutor declined to receive the indictment on the ground that, as the woman had recovered and showed no marks of injury when examined, it was a matter for the local courts only. So Ivan went to the *mirovoi*,[1] who

[1] Local magistrate.

passed the case on to the district court. Ivan fussed about the precincts of the court, regaled the clerk and the usher on half a gallon of sweet cider, and pressed for a sentence of flogging to be awarded. And eventually the sentence was read out.

"The court ordains," read the clerk, "that Gabriel Gordieff, peasant, do receive twenty strokes within the precincts of the district police-station."

When Ivan heard the sentence he glanced at Gabriel. "How does he like it now?" he thought.

As for Gabriel, he turned as white as a sheet when the sentence was declared. Then he turned and went out into the corridor. Ivan followed him, and was just moving towards his horse when he heard Gabriel saying something.

"Very well," were Gabriel's words. "He is going to have my back flogged for me, and it will burn sorely; yet I pray that he and his may burn more sorely still."

When Ivan caught these words he at once returned into court.

"Your worship," he said, "this man has just threatened me with arson. Pray take the evidence of witnesses before whom he did it."

So Gabriel was sent for.

"Is it true that you said this?" he was asked.

"I said nothing," replied Gabriel. "Flog me if you wish. It seems that I only am to suffer, though in the right, whereas *he* may do what he pleases.'

And he was about to say more, when his lips and cheeks started quivering, and he turned his face to the wall. Even the magistrates were moved as they looked at him. "Can he really have threatened evil against his neighbour," they thought, "or was he only cursing at himself?"

So the senior magistrate said:

"See here, my good fellows. Would it not be better for you to be reconciled? For, look you, my good Gabriel, was it right what you did, to strike a pregnant woman? If you had right on your side, God has pardoned the deed, however sinful. But had you such

right? No, assuredly you had not. Yet, if you will plead guilty and express your contrition to the prosecutor, I feel sure that he will pardon you, and we will then annul the sentence."

Hearing this the clerk intervened.

"That cannot be done," he said. "The 117th Article of the Penal Code forbids reconciliation of the parties when once sentence has been passed. Therefore the sentence must be carried out."

But the magistrate paid no attention to him.

"Enough!" he said. "Hold your tongue! The article which chiefly concerns us is this: In all things remember God. And God has commanded us to be reconciled, the one with the other."

So he tried again to persuade the two peasants to see reason, but without success, for Gabriel would not listen to him.

"I am a man wanting but a year of fifty," he said, "and have a married son. Never since my boyhood have I been beaten. Yet now, when this scoundrel Ivan has brought me under the lash, I am to cry pardon to him! Nay, let things be. But he shall have cause to remember me."

Again his voice broke, and he could say no more, but turned and left the court-room.

From the district town to Ivan's home was a distance of ten versts, so that it was quite late when Ivan reached there, and the women had gone to bring the sheep home. He unsaddled his horse and stabled it, and then entered the hut. There was no one within, since his sons were not yet back from the fields, and the women had gone to fetch the sheep. Seating himself upon a bench, he plunged into thought. He recalled the passing of the sentence upon Gabriel, and how Gabriel had blanched as he heard it and turned his face to the wall. Ivan's heart suddenly contracted. He pictured to himself what it might have been like if he himself had been sentenced to be flogged, and he felt sorry for Gabriel. At that moment he heard the old man on the stove begin

coughing, and then turn himself over, put his feet to the floor, and stand up. Having risen, the old man dragged himself to the bench, and sat down beside Ivan. The effort of getting so far had exhausted him, and for a moment or two he could only cough. At length, when his coughing fit was passed, he leaned forward over the table and said:

"Well? Did the court try the case?"

"Yes," answered Ivan, "and sentenced Gabriel to twenty strokes."

The old man shook his head.

"That is bad, Ivan," he said, "as also is *all* this that you are doing. You are harming yourself even more than him. Even when he has been flogged, how will you be the better off?"

"This much—that he will refrain from doing such things again."

"But what things? What worse things has he done than you?"

"Nay, but what has he *not* done?" cried Ivan. "He nearly killed my daughter-in-law, and now threatens to fire my farm! Why should I knuckle under to him?"

The old man sighed, and said:

"You, Ivan, can walk and ride about the world, while I have to lie the year round on the stove; so that perhaps you think that you see everything and I nothing. But no, my son, it is not so. There is very little that you see, for hatred has blinded your eyes. Others' sins you see, but not your own, for *them* you place behind your back. You said just now that Gabriel has done you much evil. Yet, if he had been the only one who had done evil, there would have been no quarrel between you. Can a dispute between two men arise from one side only? No, it takes two to make a quarrel. *His* wrong-doing you see, but not your own. If all the wrong had been on his side, and all the right on yours, bad blood could never have been made. Who was it tore his beard? Who was it overturned his rick when stacked? Who was it

first haled the other before the courts, and is haling him still? Nay, but your own way of life is wrong, and that is whence the ill comes. I never lived so, my son, and never taught you to do so. How did I live with the old man, his father? Why, on neighbourly terms, as neighbours should do. If they ran short of meal, his wife would come to me and say: 'Good Uncle Frol, our meal has given out.' 'Go, then, young woman,' I would say, 'to the binn and take as much as you require.' Again, if they were lacking a hand to lead the horses at ploughing, I would say to you: 'Go, little Ivan, and help them with the horses.' Then, in my turn, if I were short of anything, I would go to his father and say: 'Uncle Gordei, I am put to it for such and such an article.' 'Take it, then, good Uncle Frol,' he would reply; and thus it always was with us, and life went smoothly. But how does it go now? Only to-day a soldier was speaking to me of Plevna; yet you and Gabriel are waging a more grievous battle than ever there was fought at Plevna. Is this the proper way to live, then? No, it is not—it is sinful. You are a peasant and the master of a home. I would ask you, then—what sort of a lesson are you teaching to your womenkind and children? Why, you are but teaching them to fight as dogs fight. To-day I saw that little rascal Tarass make a face at his Aunt Arina before his mother, and yet his mother only laughed at him. Is *that* right, I ask you? Are such things as *that* to be? Are you to say a word to me, and I two in return to you, and you then to strike me, and I to strike you twice for your one blow? No, no, my dear son. That was not how Christ taught us poor fools when He walked this earth of ours. He taught us that to abuse we should return no answer, and his own conscience would convict the offender. Yes, that is what Our Little Father taught us. And if a man should smite us on the one cheek, we should turn to him the other also, and even submit ourselves to death at his hands if need be. His own conscience

would convict him some day, and he would become reconciled and beg for pardon. Yes, that is what Christ taught us, and not pride. But why are you thus silent? Is it not as I say?"

But Ivan returned no answer as he listened.

The old man coughed, cleared his throat with difficulty, and went on:

"Maybe you think that Christ taught us amiss? Yet his teaching was meant for us all, and for our good. Consider now your worldly substance; has it increased or decreased since this Plevna was begun between you two? Cast up how much you have spent on law-costs, on journeying to court and expenses. Here are you, with three sons strong as eagles, and with plenty to live upon; yet, for all that, you must go seeking misfortune and wasting your means! And why? Simply through pride. You ought to be out in the fields with your sons—ploughing and sowing; yet you spend your time forever haling your enemy to court over some trifle or another. The ploughing is delayed, and the seeding, and so our Mother Earth does not bear. Why are the oats not sprouting yet? When were they sown? You had to go to town, forsooth. Yet what have you gained by your law-suiting? Only a load round your own neck. Ah, my son, remember what is your proper work in life. Turn again to your ploughing and your sons and your home, and if any man offends you, pardon him as God has bidden us do. Then will everything go better with you, and there will always be peace in your soul."

Still Ivan said nothing.

"But see here, now, dear Ivan," went on his father. "Listen to me who am an old man. Saddle the roan horse, and go back to the police-station and cancel your suit. Then, in the morning, go to Gabriel and ask pardon of him in God's name, and invite him to your home for the festival. To-morrow, the birthday of Our Lady, set out the *samovar*, take a half-bottle, and renounce this sinfulness for ever. Ay, and bid the women and children do the same."

Ivan sighed as he thought to himself: "Assuredly the old man is right, only I know not how to do this—how I am to become reconciled."

The old man seemed to have guessed his thoughts, for he said:

"Nay, but do not delay, dear Ivan. A fire should be quenched at the start, else, if it burn up, it may never be mastered."

He was going on to say more, when the women entered, chattering like magpies. Already they had heard the whole story of Gabriel being sentenced to a flogging and of his making threats of arson. Yes, they knew all about it, and had hastened to put their oar in by getting up a quarrel with Gabriel's women-folk at the pasture-ground. Now they burst out with the news that Gabriel's daughter-in-law had threatened them with the public prosecutor, whom she declared to be intervening on Gabriel's behalf. The public prosecutor (so said the women) was reviewing the whole case, and the schoolmaster had written out a petition to the Tsar in person, and in this petition every suit was set forth from the beginning—the one about the linch-pin, and the one about the garden-ground, and so on—and half Ivan's land would be given to Gabriel as compensation.

When Ivan heard all this his heart grew hard again, and he thought better of being reconciled to his adversary.

A farmer always has much to do on his farm, so, instead of discussing matters with the women, Ivan rose and left the hut. By the time he had cleared up things in the barn and stable the sun had set and his sons were returning from the fields, where they had been ploughing a double tilth during the winter in readiness for the spring corn. Ivan met them and asked them about their work, after which he helped them to take the harness off the horses, laid aside a broken horse-collar for repairs, and was for stowing away some poles in the stable, but it was getting too dark to see. So he left the poles till the

morning, and, after feeding the stock, opened the gates for young Tarass to take the horses across the roadway to their night pasture. Finally, he closed the gates, put up the board which fastened them, picked up the broken horse-collar and walked towards the hut, thinking: "It is time now for supper and bed." At the moment he had forgotten all about Gabriel, as well as about his father's words; yet he had no sooner laid his hand upon the door-knob to enter the porch, than he heard his neighbour shout out in a hoarse voice to someone on the other side of the fence: "To the devil with him! I could kill him!"

These words aroused in Ivan all his old enmity against his neighbour, and he waited to hear what more he might say. But nothing further came from Gabriel, so Ivan went indoors. The lamp had just been lit, the young woman was sitting at her loom in the corner, the goodwife was preparing supper, the eldest son was putting a patch into his bast shoes, the second son was reading a book at the table, and little Tarass was getting himself ready to go and sleep in the horse-stable over the way. Everything would have looked cosy and cheerful had it not been for that one blighting influence—their wicked neighbour.

Ivan came in tired, turned the cat off the bench, and rated the women for having put the stove-couch out of its place. He sat down with knitted brows to mend the horse-collar, but felt restless somehow. Gabriel's words would keep running through his head —both the threats he had uttered in the court-house, and the words he had just shouted in a hoarse voice to someone behind the fence: "I could kill him!"

Meanwhile the goodwife was bustling about to give young Tarass his supper. As soon as he had eaten it, he put on his little sheepskin and *kaftan*, belted them round, took a hunch of bread, and went out to drive the mares down the street. His eldest brother was for going with him, but Ivan himself rose and accompanied him out on to the steps. It was quite dark now in the yard, for the sky was overcast and a wind

was rising. Ivan descended from the steps to mount his little son, and, having shoo'ed the foals after him, stood watching them depart. He could hear Tarass go riding along the street, until joined by other boys, and then the sound of them die away. Yet he still hung about the gates, for Gabriel's words would not leave his mind: "I pray that he and his may burn more sorely still."

"He would not hesitate to do it," thought Ivan. "Everything is standing dry now, and there is a wind blowing, so that if he were to get in somewhere at the back, and fire things from there, it would make a terrible blaze. The wind would fan it too fiercely for it ever to stop. Yes, once it were alight there would be no putting it out."

The idea took such a hold upon Ivan that, instead of returning to the steps, he went out into the roadway, and then round behind the gates.

"Suppose I make a complete inspection of the place?" he thought. "Who knows what that man may not be up to?" So he left the gates, and went along with stealthy tread until he came to the corner. There, as he glanced along the wall, he thought he could discern something moving—something which jutted out at one moment, and became hidden in a recess the next. He stopped and remained absolutely still as he listened and watched. Yet all was quiet. Only the wind kept shaking the leaves of a vine-stock and moaning through its stems. It was very dark, yet not so completely so but that, by straining his eyes, Ivan could distinguish the outlines of things—of the back wall, a plough, and the eaves overhead. He listened and watched, but there seemed to be no one there.

"I cannot help thinking that I saw a glimmer just now," he said to himself. "Suppose I were to go right round the place?" So he crept stealthily along under the stable, walking so softly in his bast shoes that he could not even hear his own footsteps. He had almost reached the recess when lo! something

flashed for a moment beside the plough, and then disappeared. Ivan's heart gave a thump, and he stopped dead. Yet even as he did so there came a brighter glimmer at that spot—a glimmer which revealed a man in a cap—a man kneeling back upon his heels and engaged in lighting a tuft of straw which he held in his hands. Ivan's heart beat in his breast like a bird fluttering, as, stiffening himself all over, he darted forward with long strides, but too softly for him even to hear his own footsteps. "He shall not escape me!" he thought. "I will catch him in the very act!"

He had not advanced another couple of strides when suddenly a brilliant light flared up—but not from the spot low down in the recess, for the wattling of the wall flamed up in the eaves, and thence the fire was carried on to the roof. In the light of the flames Gabriel stood revealed as clear as day.

Ivan made for the lame man as a hawk stoops to a lark. "I will wring his neck now," he thought, "for he cannot escape me." Yet the lame man must suddenly have heard his footsteps, for he glanced round, and then, with a sudden turn of speed, limped away like a hare.

"You shall not escape me!" shouted Ivan as he flew in pursuit. Just as he was on the point of seizing him by the collar, the hunted man doubled, and Ivan's hands clutched the tail of his coat only. The tail tore away, and Ivan fell forwards. Instantly leaping up again, he shouted, "Watchman! Hold him!" and resumed the chase.

Yet, while he had been scrambling to his feet, Gabriel had regained his own yard. Ivan pursued him there, and was once more on the point of seizing him, when something crashed down upon his head, like a rock falling from above. Gabriel had picked up an oaken stake lying in the yard, swung it aloft to the full extent of his arm, and brought it down upon Ivan's head just as the latter ran in upon him.

Ivan blinked his eyes, and sparks flashed before

them. Then all grew dark as he staggered and fell to the ground. When he came to himself again Gabriel had disappeared, and it was as light as day, while from the direction of his own yard there came a crackling, rattling sort of a sound, like a machine at work. Ivan turned his head and saw that the whole of the back shed was ablaze, and that the side shed too had caught, while flames and smoke and bits of burning straw in the smoke were being carried in a stream on to the hut.

"Help, neighbours!" cried Ivan, raising his hands in despair and smacking them down upon his thighs. "Pull the burning stuff from the eaves for me, and stamp it out! Help, good neighbours!"

He tried to keep on shouting, but his breath failed him and his voice choked. Then he tried to start running, but his legs refused to move, and kept catching against one another. Whenever he took a step forward he staggered, and his breath failed, so that he had to stand still and recover it before he could move again. At last, however, he managed to get round the shed and approach the fire. The side shed was a mass of flames, as also were one corner of the hut and the porch. Indeed, the flames were bursting so furiously from the hut that the yard was impassable. A large crowd had collected, but had done nothing. Only the neighbours had succeeded in removing their stock and furniture from their own premises.

Gabriel's place was the next one after Ivan's to be consumed, and then, the wind carrying the flames across the roadway, half the village became involved. The old man had been got out of Ivan's hut only just in time, while the others had had to rush forth exactly as they were, and abandon everything. The whole of the stock except the horses at night pasture had been consumed, as well as the poultry on the roosting beams, the carts, the ploughs, the harrows, the women's chests, and the grain in the binns. On the other hand, Gabriel's stock was saved, and a certain amount of his other belongings.

The fire lasted for a long time—all night, in fact—and for a while Ivan stood watching his place being consumed, and reiterating at intervals: "Help, good neighbours! Pull out the burning stuff and stamp upon it!" But when at length the roof of the hut fell in, he rushed into the very heart of the fire, and, seizing hold of a blazing beam, tried to drag it out. The women had seen him and called to him to come back, but he nevertheless dragged out the beam, and was about to drag out another, when he suddenly staggered and fell into the flames. His son went in after him, and got him out, but, although his hair and beard had been singed, his clothes half burnt away, and his hands injured, he had felt nothing. "He has gone mad with grief," said the peasants. In time the fire began to die down, yet Ivan still stood there, repeating: "Help, neighbours! Pull out the burning stuff!"

Next morning the *starosta* sent his son to him.

"Uncle Ivan," said the son, "your father is dying, and bade me fetch you to take leave of him."

Ivan had forgotten all about his father, and could not understand who was referred to.

"Whose father?" he asked. "And who is it he wants?"

"Yourself. He bade me fetch you to take leave of him. He is dying in our hut. Come, Uncle Ivan" —and the *starosta's* son held out his hand to him. Ivan went with him.

Some blazing straw had fallen upon the old man as he was being carried out of the hut the previous night, and burnt him badly. They had then removed him to the *starosta's* hut, which stood in the far outskirts of the village, and had escaped the fire.

When Ivan reached his father there was no one in the hut but an old woman, and some children lying on the stove; for everyone else was busy at the ruins of the fire. The old man was lying in a bunk, with a candle in his hands, and his face turned towards the door. As soon as his son entered the outer door he

stirred a little, and when the old woman went to tell him that his son had come, he bade him draw nearer. Ivan did so, and the old man said:

"What did I tell you, dear Ivan? Who was it fired the village?"

"*He*, dear father. *He*, for I found him at it. With my own eyes I saw him put the kindling into the eaves. Ah, if only I had stopped to pull out the burning straw and stamp upon it! But I had no time."

"Ivan," went on the old man, "my end is near, and I would have you reconciled. Whose was the fault?"

Ivan gazed fixedly at his father, but remained silent. Not a word could he utter.

"Before God, speak," said his father again. "Whose was the fault? What did I say to you but lately?"

Then at length Ivan came to himself and understood all. He gave a sob and replied:

"Mine was the fault, dear father."

Then, bursting into tears, he fell upon his knees and exclaimed:

"Pardon me, O my father! I have sinned both against you and against God!"

The old man moved his hands and changed the candle into his left. Then he raised his right hand towards his forehead as though to cross himself, but could not stretch it so far, and desisted.

"Glory be to Thee, oh, Lord! Glory be to Thee!" he murmured as he turned his eyes again upon his son. "But, Ivan, dear Ivan—"

"What is it, my father?"

"What shall you do now?"

Ivan burst out weeping afresh.

"I know not, dear father," he said. "How, indeed, are we to live, now that this has happened?"

The old man closed his eyes, moistened his lips a little, as though he were collecting all his strength, and then said, as he re-opened his eyes:

"Live on and prosper. So long as your life be with God, you will prosper."

He was silent for a moment, then smiled gently and continued:

"Look you, dear Ivan—*never* say who started the fire. If you should shield the sins of another, God will pardon you two of your own"—and, taking the candle in his two hands, the old man folded them upon his breast, sighed, stretched himself out, and passed away.

Ivan never told of Gabriel, and so no one ever knew whence the fire originated.

Indeed, Ivan's heart went out to Gabriel, while Gabriel, for his part, was amazed that Ivan had never informed against him. At first he went in fear of him, but gradually grew accustomed to the new order of things; with the result that the two peasants abandoned their feud, and their families did the same. While their new homesteads were being built, the two families lived as one, under the same roof; and when the whole village had been rebuilt, with its huts put wider apart, Ivan and Gabriel still remained neighbours, with contiguous homesteads.

Indeed, they lived as good neighbours as their fathers had done. Never did Ivan Shtchevbakoff forget the advice of the old man and the law of God—that a fire should be quenched when it is but a spark.

If any man did him wrong, he would strive, not to avenge himself, but to right the matter; and if any man flung him an evil word, he would strive, not to return a word more evil, but to teach that man a better one. And in like manner also he taught his women-folk and sons to do.

Thus Ivan Shtchevbakoff put straight his way of life, and prospered as he had never done before.

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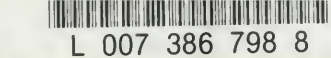
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